A WOMAN'S VOICE SPEAKING: MID-CENTURY IRISH WOMANHOOD IN THE SHORT STORIES OF FRANK O'CONNOR

By

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PREFACE

I first became aware of Frank O'Connor in the 1970s through a pair of stories, "The Duke's Children" and "My Oedipus Complex," in texts I was teaching at St. Johns Country Day School in Orange Park, Florida. My interest was heightened in 1983 when I read "The Duke's Child" in The New Yorker, William Maxwell's angry critique of James Matthews's biography of O'Connor. Maxwell had been O'Connor's friend and editor at The New Yorker, and he believed that Matthews's work failed to do justice to O'Connor as a writer and as a person.

Thus I was already intrigued with O'Connor when I began to study Irish literature with Richard Bizot at the University of North Florida in 1986. As a result, I elected to make O'Connor the focal point of my Irish experience. When I travelled to Ireland that year, I took a side trip to O'Connor's birth place in Cork, where I discovered that the Hivernia Theatre was that day presenting a dramatization of two of O'Connor's stories, "Music When Soft Voices Die" and "News For the Church." During a luncheon held at the theatre, I met Nancy McCarthy, O'Connor's first love and lifetime friend, then 86 years old, and we formed a close friendship which lasted until her death two and a half years later. Through Nancy I began corresponding with O'Connor's American-born widow, Harriet Sheehy, who lives in Dublin. When Harriet came to New York, I visited with her and made the plans which resulted in this dissertation. "You must write about Michael's women," she said. "No one has ever said a thing about them" (Personal interview, 6 September 1986).[1]

By this time I was enrolled in graduate school at the University of Florida, and when I returned from New York, I designated O'Connor's women as the topic for my doctoral research. Early the next year Harriet graciously invited me to visit at Ferry Point Farms in Annapolis, Maryland, the family residence where she and her husband had lived at one time and where all the O'Connor files were stored. It was a gold mine of information: countless early versions of stories—published, unpublished, uncollected—journals, clippings, books: almost more than I could comprehend in a short time. I spent a week, however, reading, taking notes, and talking to Harriet about O'Connor's women, and I returned to Florida with

a rough idea of what I wanted to do. A year later when Harriet decided to sell the Annapolis files, my husband suggested that I talk to my dissertation director, R. B. Kershner, about getting the University of Florida to purchase the papers. As a result of conversations between Dr. Kershner and Sam Gowan, Associate Director for Collection Management of the University of Florida Libraries, the university bought the material, and the Frank O'Connor Papers became part of the university's Rare Books and Literary Manuscripts Collection.

The following year I was able to visit Nancy McCarthy again, and this time I spent a full week tramping about "Michael's Cork" with this enchanting octogenarian, trying to absorb as much as possible of her outflow of tall tales, warm memories, and unceasing praise for the man whom she had dearly loved. That year I also visited Harriet in Dublin, and there she allowed me to copy the three stories used in this study which are not yet part of the O'Connor Papers, "The Picture," "The Awakening," and "The Goldfish." I corresponded with Nancy up until her death in October of that year, and each letter she wrote ended with the same encouraging words: "bless the work." Over the years I have also kept in touch with Harriet through letters, phone calls, and mutual friends. This rather unusual tale of my coming to know and write about the work of O'Connor is a modern equivalent of having known Anne Hathaway and undoubtedly accounts for my dedication to the topic and my commitment to "get it right," as O'Connor liked to say. I will always be grateful to these women who were part of O'Connor's life for their interest in and contributions to my work.

I am also indebted to members of the University of Florida faculty for their instruction, support, friendship, and patience. Brandy Kershner, my director and mentor, has backed my efforts from the beginning, and I am grateful to him for his time, talent, and truthfulness. I must also express thanks to Anne Jones, who has repeatedly read and challenged my writing. In addition I would like to express my thanks to the other members of my committee: Alistair Duckworth, Sidney Homan, and Hal Wilson of the History Department, and to David Leverenz, who was not on my committee but was always on my team. I would also like to thank Elizabeth Langland, Carolyn Smith, Felicity Trueblood, R. A. Shoaf, Melvyn New, Brian McCrea, Greg Ulmer, and the English Department secretary Cathy Williams for their advice and assistance.

The libraries of the University of Florida have provided almost all the resources for this study, and I wish to thank in particular Sam Gowan, who acquired the O'Connor Papers; Carmen Hurf, Curator of Rare Books, and her assistant, David Lashmet, who have patiently assisted me in

researching the O'Connor Papers; and the staff of Library West, who have cheerfully renewed hundreds, perhaps thousands, of books over a seven-year period.

I would also like to thank the library staff at The New Yorker, who have many times assisted me with topics related to O'Connor and other Irish writers, and Elaine Berman, the Education Editor, who has supported my academic efforts for years.

Further assistance was provided by four acquaintances of O'Connor's who granted interviews, answered my questions, and pointed me in the right direction in my search for knowledge about O'Connor: Brendan Kennelly, Augustine Martin, Thomas Flanagan, and William Maxwell.

One of the joys of scholarship is discovering friends in the academic world who believe in your work. First among these for me has been Dick Bizot, who introduced me to Irish literature and Ireland from Dublin to dolmen, read and annotated my writing over a period of many years, travelled with me to conferences, and offered me creative and productive advice. Another is Bill Slaughter, who first suggested that I go to graduate school and taught me about poetry. Yet another is Michael Steinman, probably the most important O'Connor scholar yet and a good friend who took time to read and make valuable suggestions on my work, return my phone calls, and encourage me to keep toiling in the vineyard.

I would also like to thank my printer, Susan Critchlow, my word processing assistant, Helen Van Wagenen, and Scott Joplin, who found the lost files.

Finally, one cannot accomplish a project like this without the loyal support of personal friends and family, who create the milieu in which academic growth can take place and take up the slack while it is happening. I would particularly like to thank my friends with whom I have played and prayed, and also my parents, my five children and brother and their families, my cousin, Thad Crapster, and most of all my husband, Larry Weber, who read and advised me on everything I wrote, travelled through Ireland with me and carried my books, and has served me best by standing and waiting straight through to the finish.

Notes

[1] In 1955, Michael Francis O'Donovan took the pseudonym Frank O'Connor, which was formed from his own middle name and the maiden name of his mother Minnie O'Connor O'Donovan. O'Connor was working as a government employee in a library in Wicklow, and after his friend Lennox Robinson was forced to resign when his work was censored, O'Connor decided

to write under an assumed name so that his job would be secure. His first published work under the name Frank O'Connor was a verse translation, "Suibhne Geilt Aspires," which appeared in The Irish Statesman March 14, 1925. He never published thereafter under his given name. In material quoted in this study from personal interviews, O'Connor's widow and his friends usually refer to him as "Michael."

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ABBREVIATIONS IN THE TEXT

References to O'Connor's works are cited parenthetically in the text and refer to the following editions:

OC An Only Child. New York: Knopf, 1961.

BC Bones of Contention. New York: Macmillan, 1936.

BL The Backward Look: A Survey of Irish Literature. London: Macmillan, 1967.

CAJ Crab Apple Jelly. London: Macmillan, 1944.

CC The Common Chord. New York: Knopf, 1948.

CP The Cornet Player Who Betrayed Ireland. Dublin: Poolbeg, 1981.

CS Collected Stories. New York: Knopf, 1981.

C2 Collection Two. London: Macmillan, 1964.

C3 Collection Three. London: Macmillan, 1969.

DR Domestic Relations. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1957.

DUB "Frank O'Connor On Censorship." The Dubliner Mar. 1962: 39-44.

GN Guests of the Nation. London: Macmillan, 1931.

HOL "Ireland." Holiday Dec. 1949: 34-63.

KLC Frank O'Connor, trans. Kings, Lords, and Commons: an Anthology from the Irish. London: Macmillan, 1961.

LV The Lonely Voice: A Study of the Short Story. Cleveland: World, 1963.

MFS My Father's Son. London: Macmillan, 1968

MS More Stories by Frank O'Connor. New York: Knopf, 1954.

S The Stories of Frank O'Connor. New York: Knopf, 1952.

Set A Set of Variations. New York: Knopf, 1969.

SMK The Saint and Mary Kate. London: Macmillan, 1932.

SS "The Short Story." Unpublished typescript, no date available.

TS Traveller's Samples. New York: Knopf, 1951.

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This study examines Frank O'Connor's concern with the narrative impulse in fiction and his sensitivity to the experience and politics of women's lives and argues that in his short stories O'Connor gives women a voice which anticipates the outpouring of creative expression enjoyed by Irish women of the nineties. It presents O'Connor's development of the image of woman in four groups arranged chronologically: little girls, adolescents, married women, and old women and uses as a primary resource the Frank O'Connor Papers of the University of Florida.

Chapter I, the introduction, explores the causes of the loss of prestige which Irish women encountered in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and considers how O'Connor, as a man writing within yet opposed to patriarchy, develops techniques which help break down gender barriers.

Chapter II, "Irish Tomboys," introduces O'Connor's aggressive yet sensual little girls, who demonstrate his interest in woman's search for authenticity as an integral part of her formative years and his first experiment in crafting a character type.

Chapter III, "Quicksilver Girls," examines O'Connor's images of unmarried girls making important decisions in a dangerous world and divides them into those who remain single with the choices of convent, emigration, or career, and those who wish to marry.

O'Connor shows increasing awareness of the needs of unmarried women and recognizes their progress in the capacity to deal with options.

Chapter IV, "Hard Cases," reflects O'Connor's interest in married women caught in the difficult pursuit of selfhood within a relationship and divides their stories into three groups: voiceless, unrealized peasants; intelligent women irrevocably bound in hopeless marriages; and emancipated women participating in society.

Chapter V, "Bold Crones," focuses on eccentric old women who devise schemes to stave off poverty, achieve lifetime goals, and cope with life's inequities. With their loud, clear voices and determination, they represent O'Connor's highest achievement as images of survivors in an oppressive society.

Chapter VI, the conclusion, re-examines the connection between O'Connor's interest in voice and the new image of Irish womanhood.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Frank O'Connor was gifted with a "phenomenal" speaking voice and an intense appreciation for voice in literature and life (Browne et al 109). He also had an ardent interest in women, especially Irish women, and he repeatedly asserted the need to improve their lot. It is the argument of this dissertation that through his efforts to restore to the short story the narrative impulse and because of his sensitivity to the experience and politics of women's stories, O'Connor gave a voice to women of mid-twentieth century Ireland which anticipates the outpouring of creative expression that Irish women writers of the nineties are now enjoying. This is an unexplored aspect of Connorean scholarship and one which I believe will gain importance as the new interest in Irish women writers increases.

Anyone who writes about Frank O'Connor and his role in twentieth-century Irish fiction inevitably comments on his voice and his passionate concern with it. "His voice was the thing I noticed above everything else," William Maxwell says of the day he first met O'Connor at The New Yorker (Sheehy 140). Michael Steinman, in his study of Connorean manuscripts, points to O'Connor's "tireless battles with voice and form" (1). James Matthews entitled his biography of O'Connor Voices and notes humorously, "it was said of O'Connor that his voice was so low that barnacles clung to it and that in conversation with him organ-tuners boomingly despaired of their diapasons'" (viii). In O'Connor's own study of the short story, The Lonely Voice, he writes that the short story must convey "an intense awareness of human loneliness" (19) with the "sound of a man's voice speaking--or a woman's" (35). In an interview with Malcolm Cowley in 1957, O'Connor assessed the relationship between himself and the voice by describing the way he reacted to people when he met them in the street:

> I notice particularly the cadence of their voices, the sort of phrase they'll use, and that's what I'm all the time trying to hear in my head, how people work things--because everybody speaks an entirely different language, that's really what it amount to. (169)

In the forties when O'Connor began using his extraordinary voice to read stories on the radio, he came to realize that the written word had been robbed of the narrative impulse, and he horrified prompters when he read by adding narrative effects not included in his original texts. Just as the traditional story teller had a live audience, O'Connor came to understand that the modern short story writer and the radio broadcaster had an invisible audience, and neither could afford to neglect that audience. "Generations of skillful stylists from Chekhov to Katherine Mansfield and James Joyce," he notes, "had so fashioned the short story that it no longer rang with the tone of a man's voice speaking" (LV 29). Thus it became his goal to recreate the sound of a speaking voice in his fiction and to advocate it in his writing about fiction. He achieved that goal by means of a narrator who, as Denis Donoghue notes, "discloses the truth a character could not disclose himself" (232). As a result, according to Thomas Flanagan, O'Connor made the narrative voice "the center of his art" (Sheehy 160).

To illustrate O'Connor's role in breaking what I call the "silence barrier" both for the short story and for women, one has only to look at O'Connor's proposed revision of Kipling's "The Gardener" in The Lonely Voice (102). As Kipling wrote it, the story begins with a testimonial to the honorable deed of Helen Turrell, an English woman who adopted her deceased brother's illegitimate child by the daughter of a non-commissioned officer. Admired for her noble act by the complacent British community in which she lives, she takes charge of the boy's upbringing until he joins the army and is killed in battle at Ypres. The story concludes when Helen visits the cemetery and the gardener reveals that she has come to visit the grave not of her nephew but of her son.

According to O'Connor, Kipling wants us to believe that he and the villagers belong to a smug group of aristocrats who do their duty whatever the circumstance. O'Connor, instead, would have the narrator speak with the lonely voice of a submerged population--in this case all the lonely, unmarried, pregnant women, faced with disgrace and forced to fabricate excuses. Rewriting the story, O'Connor would have it begin, "Helen Turrell was about to have an illegitimate baby" (LV 102). If the narrator were to tell the truth about Helen, he would reveal the substance of her character; only thus could we hear the sound of her lonely voice.

The truth about Irish women and the sound of their lonely voices became of primary importance to O'Connor early in his career. Writing in his autobiography about the period after the Civil War when he returned to Cork in 1923, he notes with sadness the subordinate

place of women in the new Free State:

> It is an Ireland that is disappearing, an Ireland arranged for the convenience of some particular man, where women--some of whom were more brilliant than any man in the household and risked their lives just as much--worked harder than servant girls and will probably never realize why it is that when I look back on the period, it is of them rather than of their brothers that I think. (OC 241)

Gradually O'Connor began to receive acclaim for his stories about women, although early critics sometimes failed to perceive the importance of his work to the cause of Irish women. "Few men writing today have a keener eye on women than has O'Connor; the fact that they happen to be Irish is a mere accident of geographical location," Horace Gregory wrote in the Saturday Review shortly after the publication of O'Connor's collection More Stories in 1954 (20). In 1977, after the election of the first Irish Prime Minister who had not been part of the Rebellion, Julian Moynahan claimed in the New York Times that O'Connor was one of the literary spokesmen for independent Ireland and hinted at a connection between O'Connor's women and the state:

> O'Connor has no rival as historian of the submerged population's Woman and Peasant . . . In [his women's] tendency to act against their own best interests, perhaps in some sort of final, wounded recoil against the entire puritanical conditioning to which they are exposed, these women may epitomize Ireland.

In 1981, in the introduction to O'Connor's posthumously published Collected Works, Richard Ellmann was the first actually to assert that O'Connor had taken a firm political position in favor of women: "As for women, though they occupy a subordinate place in the economy, O'Connor is on their side as they slice through the male palaver" (xii). In 1990, Harriet Sheehy, O'Connor's widow, claimed that an essential part of O'Connor's philosophy was his advocacy of women and that one needed only to explore his fiction to see how modern his attitude towards them actually was:

> If you went carefully and sympathetically through Michael's stories, just took the women out and said, 'What is Michael saying about them?'--you would find that he had very advanced ideas of what women should be allowed to do, to think, to feel. (Steinman, "The Perils of Biography" 256)

To understand what it means to be on woman's side and to have "very advanced ideas," we need first to determine the nature and extent of the "male palaver" and to understand something about "an Ireland arranged for the convenience of some particular man."

In O'Connor's history of Irish literature, The Backward Look (1967), he writes that the Act of Union in 1800, which abolished the Irish Parliament and eliminated any independent power in Gaelic Ireland for more than a hundred years, "produced such a profound change in the whole life of the community that it makes the literature that followed it seem more like a new subject than a new phase" (132). He also claims that if their had been, an Irish Parliament, it would never have tolerated "the cold, deliberate ferocity and cant of the 1840s" which is usually called the Great Famine, but might better be termed "a genocide or an extermination" because it resulted in the deaths of over a million Gaelic-Irish whom the British did nothing to assist (133). The nationalistic concept of the Famine as a watershed in Irish history began to be scrutinized after the 1960s by social and economic historians who discovered that many of the conditions of pre-Famine Ireland continued into post-Famine Ireland (Rhodes 10). What they also discovered, however, was that the one place where the popular image of "two Irelands" divided by the Famine was among the rural poor and particularly among women (45-46).

The nation that developed after the Famine consisted of a homogeneous group of rural farmers and urban shopkeepers who claimed an increased local and familial authority which led first to the loss of prestige for women and later to the mass emigration of women and men. Before the Famine, rural women could expect to marry young, work alongside their husbands in the fields, and raise children. They could also provide extra income from cottage crafts. Thus pre-Famine wives were, in reality, contributing, although not equal, partners in their marriages. Although O'Connor never wrote about these women, Liam O'Flaherty presents a detailed picture of the socio-economic condidions for rural couples of this era in "Spring Sowing." The story focuses on one day in the life of Mary Delaney as she works with her husband to prepare their plot of ground for planting and as she allows the joy of their shared existence to overcome her dread of their enslavement to the "pitiless cruel earth" (13).

After the Famine, the role of women changed. With the laboring classes nearly eliminated by famine and emigration, rural farmers shifted from cultivating land to raising livestock, partly because it required fewer helping hands. At the same time, most women found themselves unable to meet the competition of mass-produced goods from the industrialized north of Ireland, and they abandoned their once profitable cottage crafts. As a consequence, rural women began the new era as a dependent minority in a subjugated nation with neither place in the fields nor pence in the pocket.

The role of rural men changed, also, and further jeopardized the role of women. Post-famine farmers, jealous of their holdings in a tenuous economy, tended to retain their lands until they died and then leave them to the eldest sons, rather than divide them among many sons as in the past. The only marriageable males were those who inherited lands, often at age forty-five or older. To win one of these males, a woman usually had to offer a dowry, and as the average farmer could afford no more than one dowry, he controlled his daughters' futures. As a consequence, few young people were in a position to marry, and by mid century Ireland had developed the lowest marriage rate in the world. With the chance of marriage severely limited, non-dowered daughters found themselves facing a future in which they had three sometimes less-than-satisfactory alternatives: emigrate, migrate, or vegetate.

Between 1850 and 1925, six million Irish emigrated, more than half of them women. They left behind families whose relationships were unique in the history of the world. Mothers, often bound unromantically to older authoritarian men, had neither social life nor responsibility beyond home and tended to find their only joy in adoring their sons. Fathers were free to develop separate spheres of existence in which they could attend all-male social gatherings and remain insensitive to the woman's world. Although most families would be glad to part with the burden of unmarried daughters, they were usually grateful for unmarried sons who remained as free laborers at home in a state of permanent celibacy. As the large unmarriageable population grew, society came to distrust any relationship between men and women and began to develop the idea that sexual relations were sinful and to make every effort to keep young people apart.

The idea was not limited to rural communities. As an alternative to emigration, unmarriageable daughters--and sometimes sons--might migrate to a nearby village, hoping to find occupation, indenture, or marriage. In this way, Terence Brown notes, the migrating youth of Ireland tended to spread the new attitudes:

> The values and familist social structures of the farm world were transferred to the shop and town thereby ensuring that the cultural and political influence of the small and strong farmers in the country was augmented by that of the grocers and small traders of the town. (22 - 23)

The reorganization of the Catholic Church coincided with the advent of the new conservatism and the new attitude toward sexual relations and compounded the effect. An increased number of clergy from the farming and shopkeeping classes together with the addition of more churches and more stringent devotional requirements provided Catholics

with the opportunity to spread the concept of male dominance. The clergy extolled abstinence and purity and decried everything from dancing to v-necked dresses as they beat the bushes to prevent the natural attraction of youths from developing into "lustful infatuations" (O'Brien 114).

Changes in education and the teaching profession also strengthened the new doctrine of male supremacy. In pre-Famine Ireland two-thirds of the teachers were men educated in schools independent of the church; as a result the school represented an alternate authority to the church. According to J. J. Lee, this authority was considerably weakened when, by 1946, females trained in church-run teaching colleges and steeped in the doctrine of male supremacy, made up about fifty percent of the teaching population (Mac Curtain 41). They, in turn, taught their young female students the same doctrines. Thus education, which should have brought freedom for women, resulted instead in control over them.

There were other ironies. At the end of the nineteenth century, the movement for women's rights paralleled the rising interest in labor and national rights. Under the leadership of a small group of strong, intelligent females, women won the opportunity for higher education, the right to organize trade unions, the vote, and the right to hold office. Throughout the Treaty debate and the Civil War, however, these women clung firmly to the republican ideals of the losing side. When the country these women had helped create came into existence, they found themselves again subordinate citizens. As Margaret Mac Curtain writes, "The paradox remains to be explained: Irish women were free in the areas they had struggled for, why then were they content to remain subordinate in a society they had helped create?" (56). Nevertheless, they retained their inferior positions.

"The absence of women as a significant force" in Ireland was the topic of an address entitled "Women and the New Irish State," delivered November 1975 by Senator Mary T. W. Robinson, now President of Ireland, on Radio Telefis Eireann (Mac Curtain 58). "The absurdity of this title--Women and the New Irish State--," she noted, "only begins to dawn when you substitute the word men for women, and consider the likelihood of someone being asked to deliver a paper on 'Men and the New Irish State.'" According to Robinson, the Constitution of 1937 reinforced the ideas of "authoritarianism, loyalty and anti-intellectualism" (60) and condemned married woman to a role of non-participation when it declared that "by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the

common good cannot be achieved" and "that mothers should not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home."

The movement for government control began in 1929 with the Censorship of Publications Act, which eventually banned scores of modern works, including some by O'Connor, among them two well known collections: The Common Chord in 1947 and Traveller's Samples in 1950. Government control continued in 1935 with a ban on the sale and importation of contraceptives and on married women working in certain industries; in 1937 the Constitution prohibited divorce. Thereafter just as writers would fight for control of their words, women would have to battle to control their lives and their fertility. It would not be until the economic revival and the feminist movement of the sixties and seventies that women would begin to gain any real power over the "palaver" they had endured since the Act of Union and the Famine.

It would take an additional twenty years for women writers to begin to break through the literary palaver. Thus in The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing, a vast three-volume collection edited by Seamus Deane and published in 1991, one finds very few women writers, and Irish scholars are now joking that Deane is frantically assembling a fourth volume which he will entitle "Mad Women in the Annex" (Personal interview with Thomas Flanagan, 26 Feb. 1993). Yet Irish women have written and have written well, Ann Owens Weekes argues in the first exploratory study of Irish women's writing, Irish Women Writers: An Uncharted Tradition (1990). Critics, however, have viewed women's writing as if through a "single lens" (2), according to Weekes; they have compared women's writing to men's writing and not judged women on their own merit. Recently, however, collections devoted exclusively to women's writing have begun to emerge. Among the earliest was Wildish Things: An Anthology of New Irish Women's Writings published in 1989, in which editor Ailbhe Smythe sets forth her protest against the past: "Irish women have been bound by negative imperatives for a long time" (7). Our voices "have been overwhelmed as much by the needs of the nation as by the needs of patriarchy," Smythe continues (8). "As Irish women, we are thus doubly damned, doubly silenced" (9). The same year, in Territories of the Voice, the first collection of contemporary short stories by Irish women writers to appear in the United States, editors DeSalvo, D'Arcy, and Hogan note that Irish women are defining themselves with a "great wave" of writing. The following year, in Stories by Contemporary

Irish Women (1990), editors Casey and Casey write that "since the mid-1960's Irish women have participated in cataclysmic political, economic, and social upheaval . . . and have survived that passage" (1).

The literary rite of passage for Irish women was not visibly underway when O'Connor began writing in the late twenties, and this study is not intended to credit him with its commencement. Nevertheless O'Connor claimed to be a "feminist" (see below), and it is appropriate to consider what he may have meant by this claim and how his writing relates to it. When asked to critique a group of women writers in 1947, O'Connor responded, "I have always been an ardent feminist, and am never really happy unless there are women about" (Matthews 218). Despite O'Connor's claim, his friend Brendan Kennelly argues that O'Connor had very little notion of what being "feminist" really entailed (Personal interview, 6 July 1988). What O'Connor seems to have meant is that he liked women--"very, very much," as Sheehy states (Personal interview, 14 January 1987)--and that he believed himself sympathetic to the problems which, as noted above, the Irish patriarchal society had imposed upon women.

Despite his avowed affection for and interest in women, O'Connor never attempted to create a collection of women's stories exclusively. His first collection consisted of a set of stories about family life, which he entitled Domestic Relations. His subsequent major collections encompassed a variety of topics although he always included women's stories. His journals imply that he envisioned, but never realized, other more specifically focused collections on several topics: The Collar, stories about priests; Small Ones: Stories of Children (J/15); The Little Town: Scenes of Provincial Life (J/14); and Growing Pains, stories about adolescence (J/17). In 1972 after O'Connor's death, however, Harriet Sheehy selected a dozen stories with strong female protagonists and published them in a paperback collection entitled A Life of Your Own and Other Stories. In addition to these twelve stories, at least forty others by O'Connor focus on women as the leading character; within this body of woman-centered work one finds a well defined submerged population for whom O'Connor through his narrator hoped to become the sympathetic spokesman.

This spokesman, however, appears at times contradictory because O'Connor could, and often did, take a variety of stands when writing about women. In "The Sorcerer's Apprentice," for example, he creates a liberated woman, Una MacDermott, who turns down her steady, stodgy boyfriend after she has an affair with and decides to marry a not-yet-divorced

middle-aged man. By contrast, O'Connor could also favor the practical businessman, Jim Piper, in "The Masculine Principle," who decides that he will not marry his girl, Evelyn, until he has earned enough money to buy a house for them, and, even after she is pregnant and delivers his child, he postpones the wedding until he has the necessary funds. At times O'Connor also depicts both sides of the coin in one story, as in "The Pariah," in which all the free-thinking girls in the village gather in the kitchen of their friend Sue and explain to her brother Jack that they are not interested in his friend Terry Connolly because "you don't want a man just to want you as a wife" (DR 117). Jack responds to their remarks by confiding to the reader his rather patriarchal attitude towards these girls' single status: "I ended by deciding that what Mother called the `bad old days' when the choice of a husband was made for them by responsible relatives, were the best days that brainless girls had ever known" (116).

As these and other stories imply, O'Connor was as unwilling to resist his professed "feminist" leanings as he was unable to reject his patriarchal background, and he seems to have adopted a stance which approaches what Declan Kiberd praises in Men and Feminism in Modern Literature as "the best hope for a new sexuality":

> If man cannot purge his sexuality of its aggressive impulses, he might at once contain and express them in a mode of playful parody, epitomizing both his ancient need for them and his modern doubts about their desirability. The immutable differences between men and women could be treated in a spirit of fun, with that cheerful acceptance of human limitation which is the basis of all true humour. (216)

Evidence of O'Connor's "cheerful acceptance of human limitation" emerges throughout his work, and one must sometimes scrutinize his humor to make sure that he has not allowed his patriarchal background to undermine women when they speak in a different voice.

Other male writers within the canon have also found themselves uneasy with their "natural home in patriarchy" (Claridge and Langland 18). In Out of Bounds: Male Writers and Gender(ed) Criticism, Laura Claridge and Elizabeth Langland explore "what it means to be a man, posed against as well as within patriarchy" (7), and they conclude that "both men and women feel constricted and confused by [the] paradigms [of patriarchy]" (11). They argue that feminism encompasses both a political and an ideological agenda in which men may not be interested. They also reason that men may write in the space which the culture calls "feminine" to express themselves more fully, and they opt to consider authors

"assumed comfortable with the patriarchal tradition" and to reexamine their work and their strategies. Following this lead, I examine O'Connor in the space termed "out of bounds," and I find, as Donald Ault does of Blake, that O'Connor "achieves a sophisticated position of liberation from a patriarchal straitjacket but . . . does so apparently innocent of the terms of gender politics" (18).

Both politically and ideologically O'Connor evinces an interest in women's issues. Frequently, in his non-fiction he condemns the legislation which curtailed women's freedom of choice in abortion, contraception, and divorce. In his article on the Republic of Ireland in Holiday Magazine (December 1949) he explicitly denounces the legal and societal regulations which hobble women. In his stories about unwanted children such as "The Weeping Children" and "Babes in the Wood" and those about unhappy marriages such as "The Frying Pan," he implies his objections more subtly. He also pleads for sex education for women in stories about naive girls such as "News for the Church" and "A Mother's Warning."

In addition, one often finds O'Connor writing in the "feminine" space by adopting techniques which seem to break down gender barriers. As a male writer telling a woman's story, O'Connor occasionally shifts the point of view or the narrative voice from one revision to another specifically for the purpose of discerning a more authentic way to produce the woman's voice speaking. In only one published story, "The Goldfish," does he actually use a first person female narrator. In "Orphans," however, he tries a female point of view in an early version but abandons it, and in "The Ugly Duckling" he creates a little boy narrator at one point before he finally settles on a sympathetic adult male who is a good friend to tell in both cases a woman's story. According to Steinman, in all O'Connor's revisions one sees him struggling to get the "voices right" because he liked "showing more than telling" and he preferred to avoid "authorial interpolation" (22). As he told Malcolm Cowley, "If I use the right phrase and the reader hears the phrase in his head, he sees the individual" (169). A good story teller, according to O'Connor, operates like a good playwright who gives the actor a part then lets him do with it what he likes: "It's transferring to the reader the responsibility for acting those scenes. I've given him all the information I have and put it into his own life" (169).

Another area in which O'Connor rejects authority and seems to write in the "feminine space" is in his textual revisions. As Melvyn New claims of Laurence Sterne, O'Connor was "an ardent explorer of alternatives" (Claridge and Langland 56). For O'Connor, revision was

"inescapably necessary," according to Steinman (1). Some of the files of his working drafts, for example contain as many as ten or fifteen revised versions, for example "The Little Mother"; other stories, such as "Variations on a Theme," appear in a different form in each of three or four collections. From version to version of the same story, O'Connor alters the titles and the characters' names: "The Ugly Duckling" was first "Beauty" and then "The Miracle"; its female protagonist was first Margaret and later Nan. In other stories, he shifts the turn of events: in "Expectation of Life," after Jim's wife dies, he remarries in one version but remains unmarried in another.

O'Connor not only revises whole texts, he also moves portions of text from one story to another. According to Carol Gilligan's In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development, "connection" tends to serve as a feminine principle while "separation" serves the masculine (11). Thus O'Connor's intertextual connections may also represent writing in the "feminine" space. In "The Climber" he presents Josie Mangan, whom he first introduces as the leading character in "The Flowering Trees," and in "The Adventuress" he recreates Josie both physically and emotionally as Brenda Regan. Another form of connection appears in "The Mad Lomasneys," in which he borrows the opening scene from Josie Mangan's youth in "The Climber" to give Rita Lomasney and Ned Lowry a background as childhood sweethearts.

In other stories O'Connor's text tends to interrupt itself to prevent closure and through such discursive digressions also suggests a veering away from authority and finality. In "The Unapproved Route," Frankie Daly marries a pregnant girl named Rosalind, and the father of Rosalind's child appears on the scene just after the baby is born. In the end, Rosalind deserts Frankie for the father of her child, but before the narrator reveals the outcome, he interjects an extended statement on the forms of magnanimity, "which are all very well between men but are misplaced with women" (MS 369). The interjection breaks the story line and lessens the authority of the conclusion.

O'Connor's preference for the short story over the novel, I would argue, shows yet another non-authoritarian aspect of his writing: his desire to expose a view of life caught at a moment rather than in its totality, life lived tenuously on the edge rather than predictably in the mainstream. As he advises in The Lonely Voice, if one wants a "description of what the short story means, one could hardly find better than that single half-sentence, and from that day forth, everything was as it were changed and appeared in a different light to him" (16). It is those moments of change in the lives of the women in O'Connor's stories which I have

singled out to demonstrate his position in the mid-twentieth century as an early explorer in the "territories of the voice" which the women of the nineties now inhabit (DeSalvo et al v).

The primary source for this dissertation is the Frank O'Connor Papers at the University of Florida, which I discuss at length elsewhere (Weber 358-364). This collection contains the literary manuscripts and related materials, including one set of books, which O'Connor left to his widow Harriet Sheehy. The papers occupy twenty-eight manuscript boxes and include holograph journals and notebooks, corrected and uncorrected typescripts, carbon copies, tear sheets, galleys and correspondence related to the publication of O'Connor's works. The material is organized into seventeen divisions by genre and labeled alphabetically. Throughout this study, I refer to specific files by alphabet letter and file number.

In addition I have consulted most of the hard bound and paperback collections of O'Connor's work, published in the United States and Ireland. Various unpublished writings by O'Connor given to me by Harriet Sheehy and a wide range of published criticism about O'Connor and of gendered writing also are featured in this study. Personal interviews with various persons who knew O'Connor complete the sources. On two occasions I spent time with Nancy McCarthy in Cork. At three different times I also visited with Harriet Sheehy: in New York, Annapolis, and Dublin. In addition I interviewed four men who considered themselves friends of O'Connor: Brendan Kennelly, Augustine Martin, Thomas Flanagan, and William Maxwell.

The stories about women in this dissertation are arranged in four chapters and presented chronologically: "Irish Tomboys," little girls; "Quicksilver Girls," adolescents; "Hard Cases," married women; and "Bold Crones," old women. The sources for the chapter titles vary: "Irish Tomboys" and "Bold Crones" are original with this work. "Quicksilver Girls" is quoted from Matthews (80), and "Hard Cases" derived from O'Connor's "The Landlady" (CP 150). The study traces the development of O'Connor's women from youth to old age following a theory by O'Connor himself: "If you've got a story to tell about people and tell it in the way in which it comes chronologically, you've got the best thing you can get in fiction" (Cowley 174). Within three groups, I divide the stories into subsets and in almost all cases order them by their publication dates.

One must remember, however, that unlike Joyce who wrote Dubliners as a deliberately planned structure, O'Connor had no predetermined order for presenting his short stories. Instead he collected, from his friends, family, and every other voice he heard, what he called

four-line "themes," and he jotted them down in a small theme book, one of which, with some 120 themes, is located in the O'Connor Papers (J/35). Brendan Kennelly once described these themes as "an unscrupulous collection of non- events" (Personal interview, 6 July 88). Most of O'Connor's stories grew out of themes such as these and often out of the combination of several. Michael Steinman has recently completed a study of theme book J/35, and in a work soon to be published he discusses the stories which evolved from these themes. O'Connor's stories about women were among both his earliest and the last published and, except for the little girl stories which were exclusively the work of his early career, they represent the full range of his writing experience.

My method of selection varies with each group depending on the number of stories O'Connor wrote on the topic. In every case I have tried to focus on stories in which women appear as leading characters in the main plot and have avoided longer stories which present a less defined picture of a woman because of a wider range of major characters and numerous plots and subplots. In the chapter on the little girls, I have used every story O'Connor wrote. I divide the stories of unmarried women into two groups: those who choose to remain single and those who are hoping to marry. In selecting stories to critique about unmarried women I have tried to use as many as are necessary and appropriate to support the classification. I divide the stories about married women into three classes: the very early ones about women plagued by poverty and ignorance, a group of later stories about more sophisticated women caught in unhappy marriages, and a final set treating independent women who are the most emancipated in O'Connor's work. As with the unmarried women, I use whatever stories I feel are necessary to explore the concept. In the concluding chapter, as in the one on the Tomboys, I have included every story O'Connor wrote with a brave, determined old woman as the leading character, and a few related stories. Each of these groupings is an important area of women's studies because each represents a specific kind of woman at a particular time in modern history.

I have omitted mothers as a category because O'Connor places more emphasis on women as developing human beings than as mothering females. The finest tribute to motherhood which O'Connor wrote appears in his autobiographical volume An Only Child. According to B. L. Reid, the entire book is "an act of worship of his mother [which] ends with a paean to her" (136). Because of his admiration for his mother, O'Connor may have had difficulty creating characters who could measure up to her. In his fiction he depicts a variety

of mothers, stepmothers, fostermothers, and grandmothers as leading characters, but their primary roles in the stories are as women. For example, Josephine Corkery in "The Corkerys" is the mother of six children, but the story concerns not her mothering but the decision she made after her children were all grown: to enter a convent as she had always wanted to do. Most of O'Connor's stories about mothers echo Oriana Fallaci's advice to women, as quoted by Louise Bernikow in Among Women:

> You'll have to struggle to demonstrate that inside your smooth shapely bodythere's an intelligence crying out to be heard. To be a mother is not a trade. It's not even a duty. It's only one right among many. What an effort it will be for you to convince others of this fact. (70)

The rights of Irish women, the truth of their stories, and the sound of their lonely voices fascinated O'Connor. In writing about Mary Lavin's "Frail Vessel," O'Connor states that "even penniless, even abandoned, even bullied by her relatives, a girl who is carrying the child of a man she loves is still the principal person in life's drama" (SS 14). The truth that makes woman the principal person in life's drama forms the essence of every story in this study. O'Connor compares his efforts to comprehend the importance that this truth holds for a woman to his own labors in translating Old Irish poetry:

> I think I understand it, as I think I understand poems I have painfully and patiently translated from Old Irish, wondering all the time if they don't mean something different; but like Old Irish, it is a new and exciting and rewarding world to glance into--this world of the Irish woman. (SS 14)

The chapters which follow present O'Connor's deep and sympathetic glance into the world of Irish women. In his graveside oration, Brendan Kennelly stated that O'Connor was an "inspiration" and a "visionary," and he asserted that through O'Connor's translation of Irish poetry, he hoped to inspire the youth of Ireland to "discover the past, know the present, and challenge the future" (Sheehy 166). The study of O'Connor's translation of the experiences of Irish women into short stories will prove likewise inspirational for the field of women's studies.

CHAPTER II

IRISH TOMBOYS

O'Connor's tough little Tomboys first appeared in print in the 1930s. With one exception, however, they remained uncollected--like a group of Irish foster children--until fifteen years after his death. Collectively they form a composite image of an aggressive, sometimes violent, little girl who fights like a warrior and is feared yet admired by her peers and siblings; she can also be as cunning as a fox and as sensual as a siren. Considered as a group, the Tomboys represent the foundation for the line of O'Connor's women which extends from childhood to old age.

O'Connor's stories about children are generally classified as his "juveniles" although the term usually encompasses only males.[1] The term "Tomboy" and the classification of O'Connor's little girl stories as a unit are original with this dissertation. O'Connor published only four stories which I classify in the Tomboy group. In all of them, a tough little girl is the protagonist, and her ideas and actions motivate the plot. Three of the stories, "The Flowering Trees" (1936), "The Climber" (1940), and "The Adventuress" (1948), were published in journals early in O'Connor's career but did not appear in any of his collections until 1981 when Harriet Sheehy compiled The Cornet Player Who Betrayed Ireland, a book of O'Connor's previously uncollected stories. A fourth Tomboy story, "The Ugly Duckling," was published in The Saturday Evening Post in 1957 under the title "That Ryan Woman" and was collected in O'Connor's Domestic Relations the same year. The little Tomboy from the three earlier stories is again the protagonist in "The Ugly Duckling," but before the end she has grown up and is moving into the realm of adults. A similar little girl appears in two other stories, "The Story Teller" and "Babes in the Wood," but in neither of them is she the central character in a child's world. Two of O'Connor's male juvenile stories are also discussed in this chapter, "Old Fellows" and "What Girls Are For." These stories show how O'Connor depicts a different kind of little girl, one seen through the eyes of a little boy who finds her sometimes alluring and at other times annoying, but rarely companionable. While O'Connor's male juveniles have received widespread acclaim and have repeatedly been

collected and anthologized, his Tomboys, like most women of their times, have taken a back seat to their male counterparts and as a group remain heretofore unrecognized by critics and unexplored by scholars.

Nevertheless, the Tomboys comprise one of O'Connor's distinct submerged populations with an important set of characteristics all their own. They count as national foremothers the proud, feral women O'Connor encountered in his translation and study of early Irish poetry: women like the Hag of Beare, Queen Medb of Connacht, and the bold judges and witnesses of Bryan Merryman's "Midnight Court." They also follow a canonical tradition of brave little girls begun in the nineteenth century with Dickens's heartless Estella, Bronte's wild Cathy, and Stowe's mischievous Topsy and continued in the twentieth century with McCullers's resolute Frankie Adams and Faulkner's venturesome Caddie Compson. In addition, the Tomboys are characterized by a Rabelaisian mixture of grandeur and grotesquerie which reemerges in another group of O'Connor's women whom I have named the Bold Crones (see Chapter V). These little girls also mark one of O'Connor's earliest experiments in crafting a character type. As a result of his work with little girl stories, O'Connor amassed a rich stockpile of plots from which he could draw to explain the curious actions and decisions of adult women when he set out to write their stories. The most significant aspect of the Tomboy as a character study, however, is that O'Connor represents in her a woman's search for autonomy as an integral part of her formative years.

In recent years little girls have been recognized as an important topic of academic and psychological interest. In The Girl Within (1989), Emily Hancock of the Center for Psychological Studies in Albany, California, interviewed twenty "self-developed women who were willing to delve into the details of their lives" (4). Almost all of them recalled a period of time as girls in which they had "a real sense of joy [and] of confidence about negotiating the world on [their] own" (6). During the process of talking about their pasts, many of the women "stumbled almost by chance on the girl they had left behind" (4), what Hancock calls "the girl within." From her research Hancock concludes that "women's full development depends on circling back to the girl within and carrying her into womanhood" (260).

In a more recent study of women's psychology and girls' development, Meeting at the Crossroads (1992), Lyn Mikel Brown of Colby College and Carol Gilligan of Harvard found that girls often intentionally repress both their youthful pleasures and problems to comply with what they perceive as the price one pays for becoming a woman. According to Brown

and Gilligan, "young women tend to dissociate themselves from the painful experiences of their childhood or reinterpret and rename their actions and experiences in idealized terms" (242). Thus Brown and Gilligan claim that society and women in particular need to listen to the voices of little girls to discover why, at the onset of adolescence, they abandon the voices of their childhood, silence themselves, and allow prescriptions of nicety and purity to force them into confusion and uncertainty.

Sixty years earlier, O'Connor had already begun hearing little girls' voices. Although he was neither a psychologist nor a professor, he was a story teller with an unusual talent for listening and for evaluating and writing about what he heard. He wrote his first little girl stories when he was a bachelor. Thus these stories were not the product of fatherly pride but instead suggest the observations of a close friend of the family or of an admiring brother. O'Connor's initial interest in the stories of little girls possibly derives from a childhood desire for a companion because of the poverty of his experience as an only child and from his awareness of what Ellen Moers calls the "rough-and-tumble sexuality of the nursery" (105), the play and bonding between siblings which he would have read about and perhaps envied in Victorian novels. In his fiction he could be surrounded by a houseful of siblings. As William Maxwell notes, "An only child, Michael behaved as if he were the oldest of a large family of boys and girls" (Sheehy 146). The early little girl stories were intended to be included in a book entitled The Mirror in the Water, but the book was never published (Matthews 201). O'Connor's failure to include all but one of these stories in a later collection suggests his apprehension over the little girl as a successful character type and supports another of Brown and Gilligan's premises: the notion that society tends to trivialize the subject of little girls.

O'Connor created his early Tomboy stories just after he wrote his first novel, The Saint and Mary Kate, the story of a prostitute's daughter in love with a sensitive, pious boy. Neither the novel nor the heroine was very successful: as the story ends, Mary Kate is abandoned by the Saint, and her aged female mentor writes in a letter that Mary Kate is "improving in looks" (SMK 299), "turning out a real little lady," but "too fond of crying" (300). Nevertheless, O'Connor remained drawn to the image and began reconstructing the character type by creating a younger girl from a more respectable family who would play supporting roles to no one and would challenge the traditional submissive female part.

Like the little girls in the psychological studies of the ninties, some of O'Connor's Tomboys, over the course of the series and in his rewritings, lose touch with their feelings, push their strong emotions underground, and leave behind a silent residue of discontent. This self-silencing, Brown and Gilligan argue, is instigated and perpetuated by mothers and teachers, who force their own ideas on little girls instead of listening to them. Thus O'Connor, like Dickens, Bronte, and Stowe before him, creates little girls with either absent, ineffectual, or hostile mothers probably because he had observed the same phenomenon in literature. As Susan Peck MacDonald writes in The Lost Tradition: Mothers and Daughters in Literature, "the good supportive mother is potentially so powerful a figure as to prevent her daughter's trials from occurring [and] to shield her from the process of maturation" (Davidson 58).

Despite the opportunity to mature which the absence of strong mothering might offer them, O'Connor's little girls in growing up, like the girls in Brown and Gilligan's control groups, gradually become alert to societal prescriptions and eventually, but reluctantly, adopt them. In O'Connor's stories about young unmarried and married women, the little girls develop into women who acknowledge the dictates which divide them into good and bad according to their selflessness or selfishness, and, as a result, these two classes of women in O'Connor's stories often find themselves diminished and losing the battle for autonomy. Only in their old age do O'Connor's women reclaim their voices and speak out again, with a flair reminiscent of their girlish grandeur.

Both grand and vocal, O'Connor's Irish Tomboy makes her first appearance in 1936 in "The Flowering Trees" as Josie Mangan, the acknowledged leader of a gang of boys and girls. The children's life together belongs to what Bakhtin calls in Rabelais and His World "the culture of folk carnival humor" (4). As in the Middle Ages, when the peasants lived a life apart from the official existence of the ecclesiastics and lords, the children of the Tomboy stories operate in a "double-world" milieu (5-6). Characterized by the spirit of play, the realm of children exists apart from yet within proximity of the official adult world and subscribes to a law of its own (7). In their adventures they have suspended the "hierarchal presence" (8) of parental dictates. Characteristic of their speech is a kind of abusive language, a "special genre of billingsgate" (16) which contributes to the freedom of the carnival-type atmosphere in which the children play and communicate. Also belonging to their carnival world is the element of the grotesque, which according to Bakhtin does for art what

paradox does for logic (32). Thus from certain distortions and perversities which imply a kind of degeneration in the Tomboy stories comes the regeneration or growth which the children experience as they begin leaving childhood and learning about being adults.

In addition to Josie Mangan's gang and life in the carnival world, she also has a part in the other world, a family life which likewise contributes to her autonomy. Because her mother is deceased, she gains independence through the freedom from female parenting, and she takes on responsibility as caretaker for a younger brother, Jackie. In little boy stories, as in O'Connor's own household, mothers tend to be saintly and long-suffering while fathers are usually drunken ne'er-do-wells. In "The Flowering Trees" Josie's father is kind but feckless and enters the picture just long enough to issue commands which the children, having their own law, ignore whenever possible. The only voice of authority emanates from the housekeeper, about whom Josie laments, "No one knows what I suffered with her since me ma died" (CP 64).

The plot revolves around an itinerant Fiddler whom the gang finds one day in early spring in an old garden. Nature forms a background and provides the children a world akin to the wild Irish settings of Fenian legends. Josie determines first to attract the Fiddler and then to persuade him to play for the gang picnic. As her relationship with the Fiddler grows, "the trees . . . shoot into leaf and bloom," thus the title "The Flowering Trees" (58). An unexpected illness, however, interrupts Josie's plans; when she recovers, she finds the gang dispersed, "the leaves falling," and the Fiddler gone (64).

Although it appears to be a story of action and questing, "The Flowering Trees" also shows O'Connor's concern with the power of words. When the gang first finds the Fiddler, Josie is not with them; immediately they bring "word" of their discovery to her, their leader (54). At first she is "envious" and pretends to be busy with her records of their savings for the picnic:

Kitty Donegan	1/2
Madge Mahoney	1/2
Josie Mangan	1 and a appel [sic]
Peter Murphy	1/2

While Josie is contemplating the children's news, O'Connor interrupts the story with a brief episode which gives us a closer look at Josie's nature. When she cannot decide how to spell "appel," she draws a line through the word and eats the apple. This visceral solution to her

problem introduces Josie's manner of control, and while we laugh at her naivete, her act suggests an animalism which we tend to fear. Faulkner offers a similar solution in As I Lay Dying when Cora bakes a set of cakes and the lady who was going to buy them changes her mind: "Its not everybody can eat their mistakes," she says to herself (5).

When Josie cannot eat her mistakes, she attacks them with word and fist. Once she and the gang set out to find the Fiddler, her little brother Jackie gets tired and protests, "I wants to go home" (CP 55). To inspire his cooperation Josie goes after him with a fit of Gothic violence:

> Suddenly as the vision of the fiddler burst on her imagination anew, her tears changed to blind unreasoning fury . . . . She smacked Jackie's hands. She smacked his face. She pummelled his stomach till he doubled up and fell. She pinched his behind. Jackie screamed. Josie caught one hand and Kitty the other . . . to save his arms from dislocation, Jackie had to run. (CP 55)

Once they find the Fiddler, a strange quasi-love story takes place in which the Tomboy vacillates between her boyish and womanish personalities. When the Fiddler strikes up a tune, Josie begins to dance and suddenly become aware of her sexuality: "the blood mounted to her cheeks; she raised her head and stiffened her body till she felt it poised and motionless above her flying toes . . . for the first time she found herself deliberately willing someone to admire her" (CP 58).

Almost immediately the Fiddler becomes Josie's special friend, and, because his attention strengthens her authority over the gang, she thinks of him as her "vassal" (CP 59). Later, when he reprimands her for calling her friend names--again a problem with words--she resents his attempt at silencing and interprets it as his preference for her friend Kitty. Again angry at the interference with her plans, she feels the fury rising: "Her dream was shattered, herself an outcast and mere hanger-on in the new alliance between the Fiddler and Kitty" (59). She wonders if she has lost the gang: "The others, traitors and lipservers, had gone over to the enemy." Lapsing into her customary abusive verbiage, she prays that "God will strike them all dead" (60).

O'Connor introduces another verbal complication in a peculiar man accompanying the Fiddler who is known as the "Stutterer" and whose inability to communicate suggests a failed voice and a problem with words as well as an unknown threat. As silent partner to the music man in the children's world, he also suggests the sometimes voiceless partner to the ordinary man in the real world--woman:

> But they never knew what to make of the Stutterer. When he began to speak they looked at him in excitement, wondering what great things he was about to tell them. He would chuckle and choke and grow crimson, and wave his hands--but it never came to much that they could see. (CP 58)

The Fiddler himself is a man of obscure origins and unclear motives and is faintly reminiscent of the strange man in Joyce's "An Encounter." He gradually assumes an ambivalent position as both delightful and dangerous. He appears to know too much about the children's families, and he "talks a lot about death" (CP 59). Later after Josie's fit of anger, he sends her a letter noting the "purity of his affection" (60) and gives her a lily. The Widow Crowley, the village nurse, warns the children to avoid the Fiddler, but at Josie's insistence, they hatch a "conspiracy" (61) to get him to their picnic despite the admonition.

The story comes to a climax on the morning of the picnic when Josie breaks out in spots. In high tribute to his little girl hero, O'Connor notes that at the news of Josie's illness, the whole gang "assembled about their fallen chief" (CP 63). Like Parnell she is betrayed by a woman, the housekeeper, who has the final word and pronounces her unfit to go, and the "conspiracy" (a picnic with Home Rule) fails in its mission.

The illness transforms Josie, and through her womanly brush with love some of her childish nature dies:

> Summer was over, the days were drawing in. Of the Fiddler there was no further news; the gang had been remiss and for weeks had deserted their fortress. Maybe he had tired of waiting. Josie visited the field when the leaves were falling; she visited it three times before she realized that all was over. The Fiddler was gone. (CP 64)

In writing the story O'Connor seems to discover that when little girls encounter and survive ordeals, they emerge somewhat silenced: Josie has lost the authority of the gang and the chance to have the Fiddler play. Like the Stutterer's, her efforts never come to much that anyone can see.

In "The Climber," published four years later, Josie Mangan reappears as the same Irish Tomboy with the same family. Leaving behind the old garden and the Fiddler, O'Connor concentrates on his native Cork where Josie and Jackie meet a pair of sissified brothers, whom they lead on a series of adventures around the town and up the lanes. Fired by a feminine envy of the boys' respectability, Josie is shamed by the shabbiness of her own existence and urges her father to emulate her new friends' elegant mannerisms until she perceives she may lose her father to the boys' refined mother. Then, like any jealous woman, she acts to hold her man.

As in "The Flowering Trees," when Josie sets out on a quest, she succeeds. Inspired by his daughter's request, Mr. Mangan begins courting Mrs. Donoghue and tries to impress her by reciting scenes from Shakespeare and recounting tales of the Mangan family heroes. Josie is at once ashamed of her father's performance and begins to doubt the sufficiency of the Donoghues' lifestyle. When she learns that her father has shaved his beard and is planning to marry Mrs. Donoghue, she knows that her plan has backfired. The loss of the beard seems to represent a kind of castration for Josie's father, a loss of the symbol of his manhood and therefore a confirmation of the inadequacy of refined living:

> His face when he came in presented a sight so horrible that Josie could not bear to look. It was round and chubby and chinless; it had lost all its majesty and romance; it looked ridiculous. (CP 94)

Up to this point "The Climber" seems not strategically different from "The Flowering Trees"; in both stories Josie finds herself threatened by another woman as a result of her own foolishness. In "The Flowering Trees" the Fiddler writes a letter which solves the problem, but in "The Climber" Josie herself must carry out a plan which, like her prayer for lightning and thunder on the picnic, is both cunning and cruel. Accompanied by Jackie, she takes the unsuspecting Donoghue boys on a walk and bundles them over the wall of a garden where they are apprehended by Mrs. Ryder-Flynn, the "terrible" lady of the manor with "legs of a greyhound and arms of a prizefighter" (CP 96).

In both stories O'Connor creates grotesque situations which excite apprehension and disapproval, but as Bakhtin suggests, both emotions are part of the folk tradition, and in their absurdity, they lead to a continuance of the human condition. As she stands watching the boys carried off in disgrace, Josie is filled with "remorse and pity," and she decides that "whoever had said revenge was sweet didn't know what he was talking about" (CP 96).

Although the story is clearly didactic, the "savagery of girlhood" (Moers 107) which O'Connor creates in the Josie stories and her continuing triumph afterwards recall the Gothic violence of her predecessors: Estella's cruelty to Pip and Cathy's fury in dealing with anyone who comes between herself and Heathcliff. That evening Josie's father returns from Mrs. Donoghue, "booted out without mercy" (CP 96). He awakens Josie and offers to recite Shylock for her. Instead she asks for Romeo. Suddenly her father realizes how jealous Josie had become: "Aha so that's what you were up to? All right. You're Juliet," he consents. The little brother, who seems always to fare poorly, gets to be Tybalt, and the story closes with a

blend of reunion and innocent eroticism as the little Tomboy emerges a hero, having exercised authority practically unchallenged over three boys, a man, and a woman.

While Josie is heroic and womanly as well as childish and rebellious, Afric in "The Story Teller" (1937) is innocent and contemplative and only just beginning to question authority. Nevertheless, I include her in the study because she has what one might call a family resemblance to Josie and the Tomboys. The plot revolves around an old story teller who is dying and his devoted granddaughter who comes to realize that the fairy magic which he has foretold will not materialize.

The earliest version of the story appears in an incomplete manuscript (J/37-b) in which a mature female first-person narrator recalls her childhood admiration for her grandfather and his famous stories and her mother's objections to both. This is the only little girl story in which O'Connor experiments with a female first-person narrator, and he changes in the published version to an anonymous third-person narrator.[2] As in many of O'Connor's little boy stories, when children or adults remembering their own childhoods narrate their stories, they observe less carefully; they let their imaginations select the details and tend to focus on their own personal involvement. The narrator who is not a participant can observe more objectively and can heighten the effect of the situation by presenting it against the background of the surrounding community. In reshaping "The Story Teller," O'Connor apparently decided to move from the personal story of a little girl celebrating her grandfather to the more abstract theme of the passing of the tradition of story telling in Ireland.

In both versions O'Connor implies that the story teller is his good friend Timothy Buckley, the Tailor of Gougane Barra, the best known West Cork story teller in O'Connor's day. In the first version, the little girl states that her grandfather lived up on a hill, and "he was small and fiery and had claw eyes." She also notes that neighbors and students from the nearby city came to visit. Not only was the Tailor "small and fiery," but he lived in a cottage at the top of a hill in which his granddaughter, Sheila Buckley O'Riordan, and her family were still living as late as 1988, and among the visitors to that cottage was O'Connor himself when he lived in Cork. In the published version of this story, the story teller's son muses on his father as a "deep . . . patient, long-thinking man" (CP 70) and recalls that when the old man was trying to prevent his sons from doing anything in a hurry, he had a favorite saying: "My mother will have been drowned a year tomorrow--she'd have been round the lake since then." In the introduction to The Tailor and Ansty, a collection of Timothy

Buckley's fireside tales, O'Connor quotes the same expression as the Tailor's favorite line when he was trying to get his wife to quit bustling about the room when she had guests (Cross 6).

Although the story teller is the title character and the principal person of interest, the nameless little girl in the manuscript version, like Afric in the published story, contributes to the picture of O'Connor's Tomboys because of her independent stand in alliance with her grandfather and the mysteries of his art, in opposition to unbelievers like her mother. In the first version the narrator herself becomes a sort of story teller as she recalls her grandfather and his art:

> I thought my old grandfather the most wonderful man that ever lived. We had a little cottage by the sea and he and Grandmother had one up the hill. He was small and fiery with small claw eyes, and night after night in the winter I'd go up to his house. Sometimes some of the old neighbors came, and sometimes students, but whoever was there my grandfather was king. Someone would ask him for a story and he would lean forward and begin, "Once upon a time," and before you knew where you were you would be launched like a boat on the river of his tale. And Law, the language he used! Where he got it from I didn't know. (J/37-b 1)

Trips to grandfather's house become personal adventures for the little girl, and she persists despite her mother's objections. Her sister Annie represent the kind of little girl who has already begun to conform to the feminine prescriptions which Brown and Gilligan record: Annie sides with her mother and will not go to Grandfather's with the narrator because she does not enjoy his stories. The hostile mother, like Josie's absent mother, contributes to the narrator's independent thinking. Determined to continue her friendship with her grandfather, the narrator devises a scheme to evade her mother's control: "I used to be mad at Marm for talking lies against Grandfather's stories, but I knew the less I said the more chance I had of going out" (J/37-b 2). Later the narrator's intense feelings and angry language suggest Josie's passion: "It was cruel the way Marm hated him, and I hated her for it but I could say nothing" (3). When her mother complains that the old man is "filling the child's head with nonsense," her father resembles other Tomboy fathers and sees "no harm in it" (2).

After the grandmother dies, the grandfather moves in with the family. Now during the evenings both the narrator and her father can enjoy the stories, but "Marm" finds no humor in them. The perceptive narrator realizes the old man's plight: "He knew he was in Marm's way, but for the sake of peace he didn't complain" (J/37-b 3). She also recalls her attempts

to befriend and comfort him: "When the weather was fine he'd go sit out in the row and I'd go sit with him and he'd be teaching me things."

The manuscript version ends abruptly in the middle of a sentence: "Now the Grandfather got sick and [Marm] brought the priest to him. It seemed it was years since Grandfather went to the altar. The priest sat with him a long time, but he couldn't . . . (J/37-b 3). Either the ending to this version has been lost or O'Connor had written down in his notebook as much of the concept of the little girl's bond with her grandfather as he needed to establish the theme. He would return later to work it into a real story.

The second version opens about where the first ends: two little girls, Afric and Nance (perhaps Annie of the earlier version), are headed up to the hills to tell their father, who is making poteen (illegal whiskey), that the priest and the doctor say the girls' grandfather will die that night. The mother/daughter conflict of the manuscript version becomes immediately apparent when Nance informs Afric that "Mom says you were to stop talking about . . . the boat you said would come for grandfather. Mom says there is no boat" (CP 66). Rebellious and confident as in the early version, Afric replies, "Mom doesn't know. Grandfather knows better."

Afric's unshakable belief in Grandfather's tales becomes the focus of the published version as she reflects on his stories about death now that the old man is about to die. Grandfather's stories in the early version puzzle the little girl, and she describes them as "too long for me. 'Tis only the bits I can remember" (J/37-b 2). Afric, however, recalls them clearly, especially one about "the travelling man, death," who will come, "a man with long, long legs and a bandage over his eyes" (CP 67). Frightened by the idea of death and perhaps by the grotesque image which the old man has sketched, Afric suspects that Grandfather has quit telling the stories because he also fears a "man as big as a mountain."

Despite her fear, Afric is almost as much of a Tomboy and a father's girl as Josie. On the mountain Afric has found a lamb which accompanies her everywhere and seems to reflect her carefree nature and perhaps even her grandfather's: "an idiotic, astonished animal which stopped dead and bucked and scampered entirely without reason" (CP 65). When she volunteers to get turf for her father's fire, the lamb trips her and like a pair of siblings they wrestle and roll about in "the smell of earth and grass" (69). Later when the others return to the cottage, Afric asks to stay with her father.

By the time they come down the mountain, Grandfather has died, and Afric leaves the "low murmur of prayer" and the sound of women keening in the cottage to go "looking with a

sort of fascinated terror for the big man with the bandage over his eye" (CP 72). In the first light of day she makes a discovery which may well be a turning point in her life:

> There was no farewell, no clatter of silver oars or rowlocks as magic took her childhood away. Nothing, nothing at all. With a strange choking in her throat she went slowly back to the house. She thought that maybe she knew now why her grandfather had been so sad.

As Hancock notes about many girls growing up, Afric will relegate her belief in the magic of her grandfather's stories to the "girl within" because there is no longer anyone to tell stories to her or to listen to her stories. What connects O'Connor's early version of "The Story Teller" such an important aspect of women's studies of the nineties is that the female narrator has circled back to the "girl within" and carried her into womanhood in her own story telling. One can only regret that the magic of that female narrator's voice was silenced in revision.

O'Connor creates a somewhat different little girl when he uses a first-person male narrator who relates his own childhood experience--the masculine version of the female narrator in the manuscript of "The Story Teller." In "Old Fellows" the male narrator recalls in exaggerated juvenile language a boyhood outing with his father which is interrupted by the old fellow's repeated trips to the pub and his lengthy round of arguments with a sailor accompanied by a pretty little daughter. The daughter, like the Tomboys, is a strong-willed, self-possessed child who can be both violent and vicious, but unlike the Tomboys she is only a secondary character whom the narrator places on a pedestal from which she appears cold, beautiful, and frightening. Two versions of this story are contained in the Frank O'Connor Papers: one published in The Bell in January 1941 entitled "A Day at the Seaside" (A/56), and another, entitled "Old Fellows," located in an unpublished manuscript journal, "Small Ones: Stories of Children" (J/15), and published in a slightly different version in O'Connor's collection Crab Apple Jelly in 1944. All three stories offer the same plot with only a few variations in wording and imaging.

The story revolves around the narrator's difficulties in dealing with the sailor's daughter while the two children wait for their fathers outside the pubs. The little boy is in awe from the moment he first spies her:

> And then, when his [Father's] back was turned, looking round, what did I see only a little girl standing on the kerb with a big white frilly hat and long black hair in a plait. A beautiful child--oh, 'pon my word, a beautiful child. (A/56-b 8)

As a child fascinated by the girl's beauty, he differs from the Fiddler in "The Flowering Trees," who is attracted to Josie because she can dance to his music. O'Connor rarely presents his Tomboys as attractive because of an outward physical beauty. The beauty of a Tomboy is in her spirit. In the later version of "Old Fellows," O'Connor elaborates on the little girl's beautiful appearance by adding "a satiny white dress" (J/15 16) to her white hat so that she takes on a virginal appearance, and, as if to bring himself near her standard, he also notes that he had on "a new sailor suit." The possibility of communion with this new-found vision, however, is shattered almost immediately when the little boy attempts to make friends by smiling and is arrested by the little girl's rebuff: "And lo and behold! she drew herself up and walked past me up the path and she withered me with a look as much as to say 'How dare you, you impudent puppy!'" (A/56-a 8).

In the Tomboy stories all the children seem to belong to the same special child's world. If the little girl were Josie, she might be intrigued by the little boy and perhaps challenge him to some playful contest. The challenge instead is the provocation of a cool temptress, and the little boy, having no experience with women, is "withered" by the encounter: "The girl was haughty and cold. It was the first time I had come face to face with the heartlessness of a real beauty and her contemptuous stare knocked me flat . . . I wished I was back home with my mother" (J/15 16). Just as Mrs. Donoghue ousts Mr. Mangan after Josie's cruelty to the brothers, so the little boy in the sailor suit anticipates that his mother will protect him. The same effect occurs in most of O'Connor's juvenile stories, and, as a result, the motherless Tomboys always appear more mature than the well mothered little boys.

As the outing in "Old Fellows" progresses, both children realize that the two fathers have begun a quarrel which will take many trips to the pub to conclude and that, as children, they are operating just outside a man's world into which both physically and emotionally they cannot enter. Although they meet off and on during the day while waiting for their old fellows, they are unable to commiserate with each other because of the little girl's hostile attitude: "Tis all your fault and your father's fault," she tells him. "Ye have ruined my day on me." (J/15 18). While we never know what Jackie or the Donoghue brothers feel about themselves after Josie's fits of vengeance, the little boy narrator in "Old Fellows" makes sure that we understand that he is a kind, compassionate person by comparison with the little girl, whom he sees as heartless: "I was sorry for her," he says. "That's the sort I am; very soft-hearted" (20). Later he shows his generosity by sharing his lemonade and biscuits with her

and then claims even more sympathy for himself by gallantly trying to sail her toy boat and failing in the effort.

Toward the end of the evening as they are starting home, the little boy spots the little girl one last time, "a small figure in white. It was like an apparition" (J/15 21-22). She only appears frightening, however, and like a ghost she has no real power. When the old fellows head for the pub one more time, the little girl becomes "frantic," like Josie when Jackie balks on the way to the Fiddler, and she attacks the boy's father physically: "She scrawled at him and beat him about the legs with her fist but he only laughted at her, and when the door opened forced his way in with a shout" (23). Unlike Jackie, who ultimately gives in to Josie's brutal persuasion, the old fellows laugh and push the beautiful little girl aside.

Having exhausted all other weapons, she lures the little boy into a game of words and begins calling his father names: "Your old fellow is only a common laboring man . . . my daddy says he is ignorant and conceited" (J/15 23). Following her lead, the little boy responds: "Your old fellow is only a sailor . . . and my father says all sailors are liars." Finally, she challenges his bravery and dares him to walk home alone. Her challenge recalls the behavior of the women of Irish myth who, according to Philip Leary in "The Honour of Women in Early Irish Literature," participate in the male honor code by inspiring men to noble deeds: "Emer [wife of Irish saga hero Cuchullain] is repeatedly seen inciting men she sees are lax in their honour" (29). Thus O'Connor's little girl reaches back to the deeds of her saga foremothers when she incites her companion to act, and in heroic response to her challenge, he sets out for home. In the end, O'Connor's little girl can claim, if not the adventurous spirit of the Tomboys, at least their capacity to make their voices heard.

Four years after "Old Fellows" appeared, O'Connor began publishing in The New Yorker with "News for the Church," a story about a young unmarried girl some ten years older than most of the Tomboys (see Chapter III). Among those stories which followed in that publication were several stories with little boy heroes but no female character other than a simple Irish mother, such as "Christmas Morning" (1946), "My Da" (1947), and "The Drunkard" (1948). The only important little girl character who appears in the early New Yorker stories is Florrie Clancy in "Babes in the Wood" (1947). Although Florrie is somewhat reminiscent of Josie and adds to the developing picture of O'Connor's Tomboy, she, like the sailor's daughter, plays only a supporting role to a little boy.

Three versions of "Babes in the Wood" exist: the published version, which has appeared almost unchanged in numerous collections; the complete manuscript of a very different

unpublished version in the O'Connor Collection in a copy book with stories from the 1940s and 1950s (J/8); and a fragment, which consists of a half page of notes in manuscript in a copy book from the 1950s (J/12). The published version is the story of Terry Early, aged five, and Florrie Clancy, aged nine, both illegitimate children being raised in foster homes. When Terry's mother, whom he knows as "Auntie," mentions that she might take him to live in England with her and a "nice man" (CS 138), Florrie bluntly tells him that "Auntie" is his mother and really does not want him. Florrie also informs him that he and she are not "proper children" (147). "What's wrong with us?" he asks. "Everything," she replies. When "Auntie" fails to come, Florrie returns as his best girl, and, like babes in the wood, they find in each other the comfort no other person will provide.

The unpublished version, clearly an earlier one, bears the title "The Outcasts," crossed out and retitled in pencil "Babes in the Wood." It is narrated by a priest who tells the story of Terry, the same illegitimate boy, but this time a grown young man who is involved with Florrie, an illegitimate but disreputable girl from the same village. The fragment version, apparently written sometime after "The Outcasts" version, consists of a half page of text narrated in the first person by Terry and ends in his attempt to explain his need to find Florrie:

> Maybe she is married. But wherever she is I must find her. Everyone looks for a friend. One who has no family of his own must go in search till he finds it. Nothing else will satisfy him. Even a homeland isn't enough. (J/12 17)

In two later stories, "Music When Soft Voices Die" and "A Set of Variations on a Theme," O'Connor explores yet another aspect of the foster child's story: the child's need to find its birth parents; and in "The Weeping Children" he relates the story of an Englishman who goes to Ireland to look for a foster child who is his wife's illegitimate daughter by a previous relationship. In "Babes in the Wood," however, the children have formed a bond with each other and seem to have relinquished any hope of relating to their birth parents--a hopelessness which makes the story all the more pathetic.

In both the published and unpublished versions of "Babes in the Wood," O'Connor creates an unfortunate atmosphere which reflects his disapproval of the consequences of the laws banning abortion, contraception, and divorce. The bond between Terry and Florrie serves as a new life resulting from the grotesquerie of their common plights. In "The Outcasts" O'Connor uses the village priest to sum up the situation:

> This place is riddled with bastards. All the illegitimates of the city are farmed out here. Not that it's their fault, poor creatures. And like everyone else there's good and bad among them, mostly bad. (J/8 47)

Florrie, like Terry, is a victim of the law, but O'Connor makes her a sort of villainess as well, perhaps to intimate that the stigma of illegitimacy is worse on girls than on boys. Although in the end O'Connor seems to resurrect her by Terry's devotion to her, once the priest identifies Florrie as one of the "bad," the remainder of the story adheres to her negative qualities. She has a "supercilious" nature which faintly resembles that of the little girl in "Old Fellows," but here her airs separate her from the villagers: "she was a queer girl. Lady Clancy they used to call her," and she has "big brown eyes and a rather stiff manner" (48). She leaves the village to become a nurse and turns up later having loaned Terry a scandalous book about all the women with whom the author had slept. When the priest questions Florrie about the book, her answer is a calculated pronouncement of the scars illegitimate children bear: "What is it but life?" (49). "You'd like us to live like dogs apologizing for being alive," she continues. The story ends with the priest's disapproval and Terry's determination to find Florrie, because she is "the only one" he has (50).

In the published version of "Babes in the Wood," O'Connor draws on his knowledge of little boys and Tomboys and creates a childhood situation for Terry and Florrie to explain some of the difficulties in life which their illegitimacy has imposed on them. As before, this version focuses on Terry, and this time O'Connor provides him with a trio of threatening mother figures, who add a blend of humor and Gothic horror to his circumstance. Instead of a protective person like the little boy's mother in "Old Fellows," Terry's foster mother, is "a rough, deaf, scolding old woman doubled up with rheumatics, who'd give you a clout as quick as she'd look at you" (CS 136). His friend Florrie, being four years older, is another quasi-mother figure, who lives with Miss Clancy at the Post Office a mile through the woods. She is "tall and thin, with jet-black hair, a long ivory face, and a hook nose" (139). Her "hook nose" and black hair call to mind the witch of fairy stories, and she tells "creepy stories so well that she even frightened herself and was scared of going back through the woods alone." Like Florrie, Terry's "Auntie" also tells frightening stories, and in recounting the "Three Bears," she goes "growling and wailing and creeping on all fours with her hair over her eyes" until Terry screams "with fright and pleasure."

Although allied with the evil mothers, Florrie is also Terry's girl friend, and Terry has for her the admiration of a younger brother, a trait which is also noticaeble in Jackie and which

later develops more strongly in the "Lady Brenda" Tomboy stories: "She was gentle, she was generous, she always took his part" (CS 139). Like most of the Tomboys, Florrie has a defective mother and as a consequence an independent nature: Mrs. Early tells Terry his own mother was a "decent woman but the dear knows who that one [Florrie] is or where she came from" (142). Despite Terry's esteem for Florrie, we see in her the same ruthlessness which Josie displays; she becomes so jealous of his toys from "Auntie" and his grandiose tales of a new life, that she destroys his illusion. Then with the same sort of seductive behavior Josie uses toward the Fiddler, she lures him back: "She led him up the short cut through the woods . . . Then she sat on the grass and sedately smoothed her frock about her knees . . . If you'll swear to be always in with me I'll be your girl again" (148). In the end she puts her arms around him: "He was hers at last. There were no more rivals."

Although Florrie Clancy is not the heroine of her own story, she serves as a strong link between the early Tomboy image and the later one. She is the first of the little girls whom O'Connor describes physically, and he adds to her boyishness by giving her the long, lean structure which the later Tomboy Nan Ryan in "The Ugly Duckling" is said to inherit from her father. The adolescent Florrie in "The Outcasts," who is supercilious and called "Lady Clancy" anticipates the grandeur of Lady Brenda in "The Adventuress."

The year after "Babes in the Wood" appeared, O'Connor introduced a new Tomboy, initially known as Brenda O'Mahoney (in later versions Brenda Regan) in a story entitled "The Adventuress" (Far and Wide, 1948). This title derives from an unpublished typescript by O'Connor entitled "The Short Story" in which he writes, "There are only two kinds of Irish woman--the adventuress and the cow, and that's why I have a soft spot for adventuresses" (SS 13). The word "adventuress" is so appropriate for the Tomboy stories that any one of them might have borne the title, and, as one might suspect, there are few "cows" in O'Connor's work and none among the Tomboys.

In addition to the version published as "The Adventuress," the story appears in the O'Connor collection in three other versions all entitled "Lady Brenda." The first two, contained in the short story section of the collection as A/33-a and A/33-b, are slightly different variations on Brenda Regan's story, and although they point to her superior manner, they do not refer to her specifically as "Lady Brenda." The fourth version of the story, also entitled "Lady Brenda," is contained in the manuscript journal entitled "Small Ones: Stories of Children" and is the only one which actually calls her by that name.

Revision was part of O'Connor's craft and in his early days as a writer he often threw away early drafts after he had written what he believed was a publishable one. As a result, for most of the early works there are only the published versions extant. Sometime in the forties he seems to have begun saving drafts although he usually credited his wife Harriet with being the first to rescue them from the trash. "The Adventuress" is the first Tomboy story for which a series of early drafts still exists. These drafts comprise a set of variations on the little girl theme in which O'Connor redefines her from a harsh outspoken Tomboy to a rather grand little lady. They also suggest that during the course of his rewriting the story and fleshing out the character, O'Connor lost touch with the "girl within" who animates his early Tomboy.

All four versions tell roughly the same story: Brenda is a proud little girl who decides that her brothers and sisters should go in with her to buy their father a fountain pen for a Christmas present. Because she lacks the funds to buy a really good pen, she settles for a cheap one and changes the price on the box, only to have her father recognize the difference and ruin her gesture.

"The Adventuress" is the first of O'Connor's little girl stories to be narrated by a little boy who is a secondary character. The change from an omniscient outsider narrator may result from O'Connor's attempt to give the stories the idealism and naivete of the already successful little boy stories, but the change actually weakens the little girl's stance. With the little boy narrator, O'Connor moves from an adult world, in which nature surrounds and reflects the children's free play, to the little boy's own world where his thoughts control the action. Unlike "Old Fellows," however, the plot of "The Adventuress" revolves around the little girl, Brenda, and the narrator is her admiring little brother whose name, Michael, suggests O'Connor's own longing for siblings. Because we see Brenda through Michael's eyes, we find him excusing her faults as idiosyncrasies and admiring as feats of daring what might have been presented by an outsider as unnecessary roughness.

Like Florrie Clancy, Brenda has the typical Tomboy look: "a long, grave, bony face" like her "tall, gaunt and temperamental" father. Just as she is endowed with an unfeminine appearance, she takes on boyish challenges and makes friends who defy the feminine prescriptions (CP 139). She is her father's "favourite" and can "cheek" him to the face but will allow no one else to do so. She is "tough to the point of foolhardiness," Michael proudly boasts: on a dare she once rode a horse and when she broke her collarbone, "she took it

with the stoicism of a Red Indian." While others call her "a liar, a chancer, and a notice-box" (140), Michael remembers her as "wonderful," the "soul of generosity," and he recalls that she once "blew" three and six on an air-gun for him. In addition he notes that she was "a natural aristocrat" and adds grimly that she considered everyone beneath her and "associated with the most horrid children whose allegiance she bought with sweets or cigarettes--pinched off my brother Colum." Like the little girls in Emily Hancock's study, Brenda has forged her own patterns of acting and relating to people and as a result has acquired a sort of "wholeness of self" and a "unity with the cosmos" (Hancock 8), which Michael finds awesome.

The action in "The Adventuress" begins with the quest for a pen, and Michael accompanies Brenda. Unlike Josie's bedraggled little brother, however, Michael proudly refers to himself as Brenda's "faithful vassal," a title he shares with the Fiddler and one which helps him validate her aristocratic manner. In the shop, Brenda shifts into her womanly mode, and Michael is "amazed at her self-possession" and the "queenly toss of her head" as she bargains with a "gawky-looking assistant" (CP 141). When she has to settle for what the assistant calls "a decent little pen" (143), Michael knows it has "hurt her pride," and he fears that the salesman's "patronizing tone" will drive her to a desperate act. Her unpredictability, he notes, was "one of the joys of being with Brenda."

Once her father notices the price, he complains loudly about the "terrible blackguarding," and her mother feebly tries to distract him. Michael suggests that his mother "probably suspected that there was mischief behind" (CP 145) and, in her usual childlike way, wanted to keep it from their father. Without a strong parent figure to defend her, Brenda must wage her own wars.

To get money for the better pen, she blackmails her siblings and threatens to tell their father it was their idea. They grudgingly consent because, as Michael says, "there was nothing you could positively say Brenda would not do . . . or Father would not believe" (CP 146). In a bitter denouncement, Brenda concludes, "The trouble with our family, Michael . . . is that they all have small minds. You're the only one that hasn't. But you're only a baby, and I suppose you'll grow up just like the rest." With a philosophical cheerfulness, Michael excuses her: "I thought it was very cruel of her to say that . . . but Brenda was like that" (147).

Version A/33-a is less brutal and, as a result, tends to diminish Brenda's stand as a Tomboy. The narrator no longer introduces his sister as "disliked"; instead, she is the

"toughest" (1) in a family of which none was "exactly what you'd call a sissy." For her daring actions he substitutes an encounter with a "corner boy" (2) who accuses her of "swanking." To prove her status, she strikes up a conversation with a perfectly strange lady, whom she tells that her mother is dead and her brother may go to an orphanage. By offering a social rather than physical encounter as proof of her skills, O'Connor moves her from the realm of boys to that of girls; and, by her fantasy about her deceased mother, he implies that she is not strong because she really has no mother, but rather that she only imagines herself strong when she pretends that she has no mother. The story also takes on a trait of the little boy stories with a vilified father--here a "fanatic" (1) with an "imperialistic frame of mind"--and a helpful mother, who "sketches a diversion on her flank" (10) to divert the father's attention when he is cross with the children.

In the Christmas shopping scene for this version, Michael accompanies his sister not because he is her "vassal" but because he is her "favourite" (A/33-a 5), a word which weakens her again by suggesting a relationship based on preference rather than power. In the shop the clerk is no longer threatening but a more friendly "tall chap with pince-nez, [and] black curly hair," who addresses Brenda as "Miss O'Mahoney." At the end Brenda repeats her prediction that Michael will grow up with a "small mind" like the rest of them, but he thinks it is "unkind" (12) rather than "cruel."

With each succeeding version, O'Connor peels off layers of harshness. In the second "Lady Brenda" version (A/33-b), he experiments with voice, transferring the point of view to a friend of Brenda's older brother. By the shift, the story loses credibility since the narrator takes no part in the narrative. The story also loses intensity since it is no longer an on-the-spot report of a little boy who conjures up the elaborate war metaphor and stands in awe of his sister. In returning to an adult non-participating narrator as in the "Flowering Trees," O'Connor does not, however, revert to Gothic langage and sympathetic landscape. Instead he takes on a male's competitive attitude toward his friend's father and a more complimentary tone with the mother and sister. The father is even more unreasonable; after the row over the pen, he is "perfectly happy, having ruined the whole day on the family" (A/33-b 8). The mother becomes more protective and for the first time actually speaks out in Brenda's defense. Brenda herself becomes almost genteel: when she knocks on the woman's door, she speaks "just like a real lady" (2), and at the breakfast table, while her father is examining the pen, she has "a radiant look that would have suggested sanctity except to someone

that knew her" (6).

Brenda's radiance and sanctity continue to grow in the "Lady Brenda" manuscript version (J/15). The story is again narrated in the first person by the little brother (again Michael) who is now "mystified" (77) by his sister, whom all the kids call "Lady Brenda":

> First I vaguely thought it was some sort of title that distinguished her from the rest of us; then--even more vaguely--I thought it represented some hereditary taint from which the rest of us were free: only after years did I get it into proper perspective and realize that it referred to something in her that made her slightly different from the others that was what we called her 'grandeur.' (J/15 77)

The concept of grandeur dominates the entire story as O'Connor creates the most sophisticated and spiritual little girl in his repertoire. She still has a no-nonsense family at war with the father, but Brenda's role now elevates her above the others:

> At intervals the nonsense [would] rise up in her; you felt the girl was moving like a somnambulist in an environment she couldn't see, reverting to the gentility of some deceased old grand-aunt and displaying aspirations towards higher things. (J/15 77)

The genteel, superior Brenda is far removed from the belligerence of the swearing, smacking Josie. When a neighborhood boy accuses her of "swanking" (78) she gives him a look of "frosty disdain." When she senses that the clerk will not relent on the price of the pen, she bargains with him "in a tone that could have softened a snowman" (81). When her father questions her, she stares at him, "innocent and resolute" (82). When her brothers and sisters are furious, she bears "it all with an icy stare" (84). Compared with the Tomboys of the early stories, this girl has the composure of a much older woman.

With all her mystery and airs, however, "Lady Brenda" becomes O'Connor's least autonomous little girl; she is hardly more than a child controlled by her parents when she meets the impasse: her father's awareness that she has changed the price. Faced with the embarrassing failure of her grandiose gesture at Christmas, she is robbed of the chance to work her way out by her mother, who "levied cruel toll on her savings" and took everything out of her housekeeping to give Brenda the money for the new pen (84).

Brenda's father also plays a stronger role in this version, and like her mother, he usurps some of Brenda's importance. After the upheaval over the pen, Michael notes that their father was "in a bad temper the whole of Christmas day" (J/15 84) because he had been deprived of "an emotional outburst" since the mother decided that Brenda would be his

"agent" in returning the pen. As her father's "agent," Brenda is a different girl from the one who once had "vassals." Despite her moments of splendor, she has mellowed from the Josie of the thirties. She submits to her family's prescription of nicety and is silenced in much the same way that Brown and Gilligan found their control group complying with their teachers' rules.

The fifth little girl story included in The Cornet Player Who Betrayed Ireland, "What Girls Are For," contains none of the elements of the Tomboy stories and is included in this study only to highlight the difference between O'Connor's Tomboys and the little girls in his other stories. Published in 1951 in Collier's Magazine in America and John Bull in England, "What Girls Are For" is the story of a little boy whose life gains its importance from his position as leader of his neighborhood gang until his baby brother becomes ill and his sister shames him in his childish pride and proves herself superior to both their mother and the visiting nurse in her special gift for taking care of the sick infant.

Like some versions of "The Adventuress," this story is narrated by a little boy, but this time the narrator is a somewhat older brother who views his sister and her pursuits with great disdain and who celebrates his own prowess as a tough little fighter and the family bad boy. An early unfinished version entitled "The Chief Gang Leader" (A/87-a) suggests that O'Connor intended for the story to be another in the little boy series, all of which relate an event in the life of the narrator as seen entirely from his point of view. The change in title to "What Girls Are For" makes the narrator not only an important personage (for he remains the Chief Gang Leader) but gives him the patriarchal privilege of defining females.

The story opens with a diatribe by Michael Murphy, the "Chief Gang Leader," against his sister, Susie, in particular and all girls in general and an apology for his weaknesses as the result of his distinction:

> For years I couldn't understand what God intended girls for at all. They struck me as the most useless articles, and a real nightmare in any home. The way they went on about their old frocks and their silly dolls disgusted me. There was my sister, Susie, for instance. She was more than a year younger than I was, and she went on as if she were five years older--all because she never wet the bed. And nobody realized the truth; that she didn't sleep as heavily as I did because she never had the same worries. (A/87-a 1)

In the published version O'Connor changes the name Michael to a somewhat less formal Willie Jackson, and Susie takes on the mother-hennish name "Biddy." He also upgrades Willie by omitting the bedwetting remark but continues in the same critical vein against

girls. According to her brother, Biddy tattles to their mother if Willie steals pennies and goes "screeching" to their father when Willie pulls her hair or makes "smithereens" of her dolls (CP 173). When the new baby becomes ill, Biddy can nurse him better than anyone else, and the only effort Willie can make is to promise God to give up being Chief Gang Leader if the baby recovers. Briefly Willie admires Biddy: "I was full of pride and really sorry for smashing up her old dolls" (178). Once the baby is better, the children return to squabbling and shrieking, and Willie resumes his disdainful stance:

> It was just like old times, and I saw that, Chief Gang Leader or no Chief Gang Leader, I would be persecuted by that girl for the rest of my days. That, I suppose, is mainly what girls are for. (179)

Despite O'Connor's obvious delight in proffering Willie's invective against doll-dragging little girls and their inexplicable behavior, he had not abandoned his first love, the Tomboy, and in 1957 he published yet another story about his tough little hero. This next Tomboy, Nan Ryan, is gifted with neither swank nor grandeur; instead she is endowed with an ugliness which is "almost comic" (A/79-c 1). In a story eventually published as "The Ugly Duckling," O'Connor moves his little girl for the first time out of childhood, through adolescence, and into adulthood. She grows up a beautiful woman like the swan in Andersen's fairy tale, but she carries with her the baggage from her past; and although she has numerous suitors, she finds herself unable to commit to marriage and finishes out her life in a convent.

O'Connor first experimented with the idea of a woman who chose the convent instead of marriage in a story entitled "After Fourteen Years," published in Dublin Magazine in 1929 and later collected in Guests of the Nation. In its basic message this story echoes the romance of the ninth century Munster poetess, Liadain, whose tale O'Connor must have known during the days before he began writing short stories while he was translating early Irish poetry. Probably because he found both the poetess's name and her story so beautiful, O'Connor named his first daughter Liadain. In the poem, Liadain's choice yields her "gain without gladness" and leaves her lover, Cuirthir, an ex-poet "wrought to madness" (KLC 51). Over a period of thirty years O'Connor wrote and rewrote Liadain's story in prose, apparently in an effort to come to terms with her decision.

Like the poem, O'Connor's first version of the foiled courtship offers no image of childhood; the Tomboy's part of the story was only added only later. The original of "After Four-

teen Years" tells the story of Nicholas Coleman who visits his former love, Marie, in the garden of a convent where they both reveal the barren lives which her choice has left them. At the convent, she confesses, "one works" and "one doesn't think" (A/2.1 46); Nicholas lives so quietly that even his visit to her is too much of an adventure for him. He leaves, knowing that she has tried "desperately, with anguish," to speak and that he will know nothing but pain for days. As the train carries him back to the city, he can "distinctly hear a woman's voice, but the voice [says] nothing" (47).

Sometime between this first story and its final form as "The Ugly Duckling," O'Connor apparently heard a fragment of a tale which he jotted down in his theme book and which he would later use to enrich his convent story: "Lila's story of ugly child who grew up beautiful and then became a nun" (J/35 30). The work on which O'Connor must have begun during the fifties suggests that he was not merely searching for the logic behind Marie's decision but that he was also trying to actuate the "woman's voice" which said nothing to Nicholas Coleman as he rode home on the train. In the new story O'Connor draws on his expertise in fashioning the Tomboy, and he creates for this woman a girlhood which provides ugliness and rejection as the basis for her later decision. The O'Connor Collection contains four different versions which show the author's repeated efforts at disclosing his character's silenced voice: "The Miracle" (A/79-c), "Beauty" (A/79-d), "The Ugly Duckling" (A/79-f), and tearsheets from The Saturday Evening Post entitled "That Ryan Woman" (A/79-g). The latter was published in 1957 as "The Ugly Duckling" in Domestic Relations, and in a slightly different version under the same name in My Oedipus Complex and Other Stories (1963) and Collection Three (1981).

To convey the sound of the woman's voice, O'Connor had to develop a narrator who saw through the eyes of the sensitive young man whom his heroine had rejected and who would struggle until he could find meaning rather than madness in her decision. As Thomas Flanagan writes, O'Connor knew that "the narrator's voice was the exact center of his own art" (M/F 160). If the story was going to reveal the young woman's logic, O'Connor had to abandon the distanced omniscient narrator of "After Fourteen Years" and the adoring little brother narrator of his earlier little girl stories. In addition he had learned over the years that he was not satisfied with a female narrator to tell her own story as Liadain does in the poem, but he had to find a male narrator who would not steal the place of the real hero, the Irish Tomboy. The solution was to create an observing narrator who could speak through the

mind of a young man to whom he gave his own name, Mick (Michael), to symbolize his relation to the earlier little brother narrator and to imply a personal attachment. Mick Courtney could play with her as a child, grow to know and care for her like a brother, later love her enough to ask her to marry him, and finally understand her enough to tell her story.

The title also seems to have puzzled O'Connor. Once he added the story of the ugly child to the base tale, he abandoned "After Fourteen Years" and gave the first version the title of "Beauty," which refers to the woman whom the ugly little girl became. He later changed the title to "The Miracle," which points to the transformation itself rather than the end result. The story was published in The Saturday Evening Post as "That Ryan Woman," which may to refer to Nan's peculiar behavior before she made her decision to enter a convent: smoking, drinking, associating with strange people, and vascilating among suitors. The last title, "The Ugly Duckling," however, has a very special significance: it not only marks a connection between the ugly child and the beautiful women but it also lends the tale a mythic almost legendary grandeur, although one is not quite sure that O'Connor's ugly duckling lives happily ever after as Andersen's swan does.

O'Connor also changed the Tomboy's name from Margaret in the first version to Nan, probably an affectionate allusion to Nancy McCarthy, O'Connor's friend who was herself something of a Tomboy. The use of Nancy's name shows one of the ways O'Connor borrowed from his own life experiences and then changed the details to make them belong to one story alone: like Nan Ryan, Nancy refused to marry the man who really loved her (O'Connor); but unlike Nan, Nancy did not enter a convent. As Harriet Sheehy said of O'Connor, he believed that if he were only retelling a story from real life, he was not working his art (Personal interview, 14 January 1987).

O'Connor also had to develop a family for his Tomboy which could deal with her ugliness just as Brenda's had to handle her grandeur. Each version of the story opens with a different grotesque description of one of the family members. The first introduces Dinny, the youngest of the Ryan boys, who had "a face like a butcher's block'" (A/79-c 1). The second opens with a lengthy portrayal of the parents: Mr. Ryan is "a tall, bald, noisy man with an ape-like countenance of striking good-nature"; Mrs. Ryan is "a roly-poly" pattable woman whose spirit had been "crushed" by her husband and who occasionally "took to the bottle and wept" (A/79-d 1). The third version moves away from the family and establishes the relationship between Mick and Nan which will be the focal point of the story: "Mick Courtney

had known Nan from the time he was fourteen or fifteen" (CS 444). In time he "came to be almost as fond of her as her father and brothers were." O'Connor then presents the matter of Nan's ugliness, which becomes a problem with which each member of the family must ultimately reckon: "She had a stocky sturdy figure and masculine features all crammed into a feminine container till it bulged," and together "they made a group that was almost comic."

Because of her looks, O'Connor notes that she had almost "lost her mother's affection" (A/79-c 1), and as a result she turns to her brothers for love. When she suffers from "night-panics," Dinny takes her in his bed to soothe her, an act which breaks the "maternal rule"-- apparently a proscription against the children's sleeping with each other. By the published version O'Connor has developed the night episode into a scene with vaguely erotic over-tones:

> Dinny would be wakened in the middle of the night by Nan's pulling and shaking. 'Dinny, Dinny,' she would hiss fiercely. 'What are they this time?' Dinny would ask drowsily. 'Li-i-ions!' she would reply in a blood- curdling tone, and then lie for half an hour on his arm, contracting her toes and kicking spasmodically while he patted and soothed her. (CS 444)

In addition to comfort, Dinny offers Nan companionship, and his acceptance of her in the world of play suggests O'Connor's seal of approval on her Tomboy status:

> She grew up a tomboy, fierce, tough and tearless, fighting in Dinny's gang . . . a pocket-sized Valkyrie leaping from rock to rock, chucking stones in an awk-ward but quite effective way and screaming insults at the enemy and encour-agement to her own troops. (CS 444)

In version A/79-f, O'Connor seems to have decided to give his little Tomboy an even bolder role by changing her title from "Valkyrie" to "Amazon": traditionally, the Valkyries were war maidens who hovered over battlefields and conducted bodies of fallen male warriors to Valhalla, but Amazons were never anything other than female warriors participating in the fray.

As O'Connor's ugly duckling moves into adolescence, she gives up fighting for praying and begins to distance herself from her parents and brothers by becoming "the pious one in a family not remarkable for piety" (CS 445). Although part of the girl's maturing process is "the loosening of ties with the parents," as Katherine Dalsimer writes in Female Adoles-cence, (8), Nan Ryan gradually withdraws from all society, and, like other characters who belong to O'Connor's submerged populations-- priests, lonely old women, bright little boys--

Nan adopts what Denis Donoghue calls "the quirky doggedness of people who live on the margin" (230). Like Brenda, Nan selects outcasts for friends: as Mick notices, the people she associates with are either "all seventy or paralysed" (CS 446). She begins to take on "the tone of a dull, older woman," and by mid-story her ugliness has reached its peak:

> Though she carefully avoided all occasion for a slight, even the hint of one was enough to make her brooding and resentful . . . she [became] hideous and shapeless and furtive. She slunk round the house with her shoulders up about her ears, her red-brown hair hanging loose and a cigarette glued loosely to her lower lip. (CS 446)

The real source of the misery which she develops as an adolescent, however, is not the ugliness itself but her mother's reaction to it. O'Connor seems sensitive to the power of a girl's ugly childhood and the damage a mother's abhorrence can inflict in much the same way that Ellen Moers describes it:

> From infancy, indeed from the moment of birth, the looks of a girl are examined with ruthless scrutiny by all around her, especially by women, crucially by her own mother. (108)

Probably as a result of his early writing about little girls, O'Connor found himself able to perceive the source of the horror which was beginning to torment his little Tomboy as she came of age: "Though her brothers could ease the pangs of childhood, adolescence threw her on the mercy of life" (A/79-c 2), and he later adds, "On the mercy of her mother, that was" (A/79-d 3). "I'm no blooming beauty!" (A/79-c 3) she shouts each time her mother tries to cram her into something pretty, to which her mother cruelly responds, "but you don't want to advertise it." Like the girls in Emily Hancock's study, Nan tries to reject anything stereotypically feminine: she seems determined that neither pretty clothes nor feminine behavior will fit her.

Finally, in the published edition, O'Connor decides to preview the future to which Nan's painful childhood and her lonely prayer life had been leading her: " I don't want any of your dirty old men . . . I want to be a nun," she shouts (CS 445). In dealing with her mother's rejection she seems to find piety the only compensation for the lack of prettiness.

Then one day, in the manner of a fairy tale, she becomes ill and recovers thin, pale, and beautiful. The "awkward lumps" drop into "place and proportion," and she develops a figure, not feminine like her mother's, but a "translation of the father's" (CS 447). The house is suddenly filled with her beaux, and Mick finds himself among them. Although he is "electrified" by Nan's transformation, he also notices that "beauty brought out what ugliness

failed to do--a deep resentment of her mother," and Nan tells Mick that one reason she might want to marry would be to distance herself from her mother. Beauty does not, however, remove Nan's "quirky" behavior, and, when she continues to see other young men even after she is engaged, her "feminine" mother resents her daughter's nonconformist behavior:

> [Mrs. Ryan] was sufficiently feminine to know she might have done the same herself, and to feel that if she had, she would need correction. No man is ever as anti-feminist as a really feminine woman. (CS 451-2)

For the remainder of the story O'Connor works out his definition of "feminism" in terms of the absence of femininity in his grown-up Tomboy. Nan's father, who might have helped in this hostile situation, plays something of a male chauvinist and sees "nothing lacking in her" with the exception of "shaky mathematics," which "reasonable men do not expect" in a woman anyway (A/79-f 2).

After considerable vacillation, Nan agrees to marry Mick, then suddenly reneges and tells him she is scared of marriage and of herself: "You don't even know the kind of things I'm capable of" (CS 453). Slowly Mick realizes that the desperation which he thought had driven her into his arms--her need to get away from her mother--was really dissatisfaction with herself. He begins to suspect that she might have been "tempted too far . . . lured into an indiscretion." Although she tells Mick that she has always loved him, she refuses to marry him and at first plans to marry a rich man; later he learns that she has retired to a convent. As Julian Moynahan suggests of most of O'Connor's women, when they react to the "puritanical conditioning to which they are exposed," they end by hurting themselves. Nan acts against the unremitting maternal push toward the feminine and loses the man she loves.

The story might have ended here with the relationship frozen, in a Joycean paralysis, and the characters withered like Liadain and Curithir. In this event, as Flanagan suggests of O'Connor's bleak novel, Dutch Interior, "The Ugly Duckling" might have been one O'Connor story Joyce would have liked (Sheehy 162), and Nan might have been a latter-day Eveline, backing out just as freedom and happiness seemed near. Instead, O'Connor creates a compromise in which Mick and Nan are neither as desolate as the characters in the poem "Liadain" nor as happy as those in a fairy tale.

After several years Mick, who is married by this time, visits the convent, and through him the narrator voices the outcome of Nan's story. Mick realizes that what happened to Nan

happens to many people who suffer as children from an inadequacy such as poverty or ugliness: they ultimately develop an interior life which they come to prefer to the real world. Mick also assumes, somewhat romantically, that their old love affair will go on as before in a world "where disgust or despair would never touch it, and [will] continue to do so till both of them were dead" (CS 458). For the rest of his life Mick believes he can cherish the memory of her love in their own private realm--a compromise of dubious consolation.

Nan compromises not with love but with life. Although she tells Mick she still prays for him and she is sorry she cannot kiss him, she claims that she chose not to marry because "God came first." The life that she lives in the convent, however, provides neither the robotish existence of Marie in "After Fourteen Years" nor the prayerful devotion of a true religieuse. In her new life Nan seems to be living in a new sort of carnival world with a law unto itself, not unlike the folk spectacle O'Connor creates for the early Tomboys. As she tells Mick, the convent has a special character, a place "which would give you the creeps" (CS 456) with its "ugly" parlour and Bavarian Sacred Hearts. The old chaplain is a "terror," she adds with apparent pride. "He thinks I'm the New Nun. He's been hearing about her all his life, but I'm the first he's run across." Nan has reclaimed the "girl within," but she can only act out the drama inside the convent walls. Here, with no feminine mother and the non-threatening masculine approval of the old chaplain, she can safely be O'Connor's feminist "New Nun."

After "The Ugly Duckling," O'Connor ceased to create Tomboys although he occasionally borrowed episodes from their adventurous lives to enhance his tales about unmarried and married women. With Nan living out her life in the convent, O'Connor leaves his Tomboy, as it were, frozen in childhood. One might argue that he outgrew her, lost interest in her little girl quests and quarrels, or merely found the topic had become trivial. One might also argue that he fell in love with her and chose to preserve her in childhood rather than to share her with one of her many suitors. Such a love could even help account for the many stories he wrote about women who married the wrong man.

Whatever the reason, the Tomboy is O'Connor's special creation. His development of a rich series of stories about her life indicates that he had gained an insight into girlhood and its importance. This study of the Tomboy also suggests that O'Connor perceived a relationship between autonomous little girls and viable, self-possessed women just as scholars of the nineties are now doing.

In the following chapters I examine stories about Tomboys who have grown into lively young women, and I find that often, instead of presenting them as developing into successful self-actuated women, O'Connor depicts them as silenced by lack of education and excess of legislation. Without some radical changes in Ireland, O'Connor knew that the free spirit of the young Irish women, like the spirits of the Irish Tomboys themselves, would remain permanently impaled in youth.

Notes

[1]Among the best known of O'Connor's little boy stories are "My First Confession" (Harpers Bazaar, 1939), "Old Fellows" (The Bell, 1941), "Christmas Morning" (The New Yorker, 1946), "My Da" (The New Yorker, 1947), "The Drunkard" (The New Yorker, 1948), "The Idealist" (The New Yorker, 1950), "My Oedipus Complex" (Today's Woman, 1950), "The Genius" (Winter's Tales, 1955). Each of the above stories appeared in one of the following collections compiled by O'Connor himself: The Stories of Frank O'Connor (1953) and Domestic Relations (1957).

[2] The only published stories with a female narrator are "The Goldfish" and "Orphans" both of which are more personal narrative reminiscences rather than actual short stories.

CHAPTER III

QUICKSILVER GIRLS

In the introduction to O'Connor's Collected Stories, Richard Ellmann suggests that reading O'Connor gives one "the pleasure of catching Ireland as it was changing, and of enjoying and cherishing it, flyspecks and all" (xiii). Readers can glimpse a similar momentary magic if they focus their attention on O'Connor's portraits of young unmarried Irish girls as they stand with all their flairs and frailties at their own moments of change, on the brink of womanhood. When these girls move from childhood into adolescence, most of them retain the swank and grandeur of their Tomboy days because O'Connor portrays each of them as having already crystallized her sense of self as a child. As Emily Hancock writes, "the self-possessed child serves as the touchstone for woman's identity" (3). A woman's future, however, hinges on a moment of decision when she must wrestle with options; later, as a result of her choices, she must reckon with consequences. Leaving the insularity of home, the young unmarried women in O'Connor's stories move from the margin toward the mainstream, where, like others from submerged populations, they will cope or collapse. In her recently published anthology of Irish women's writing, Wildish Things, editor Ailbhe Smyth characterizes the existence which wild Irish girls experience: "Living and creating on the margin makes you sharp, tough, sometimes wise, but it's still a hard, lonely, dangerous place to be" (13). She continues, "The margin leaves its scars on those who survive. And the survivors are often angry."

Over the years O'Connor produced a series of stories about young female survivors who are independent, impetuous, and often irreverent. They are also scarred and scared. These unmarried girls are sometimes modeled after the daughters of a pair of families O'Connor knew, one in Sligo and the other in Cork. As a shy, only child, he was intrigued with the intricacies of their lifestyles and their lively, secure families, and he experimented with obvious delight in writing stories which placed these girls in various predicaments and manipulating the details as he gained insight toward whatever conclusions seemed to work. Other stories about unmarried women reflect his personal life: women he had loved, married, and be-

friended.

The name "quicksilver girl" derives from Matthews's description of O'Connor's heroine in his first novel, The Saint and Mary Kate (80). Mary Kate is the daughter of a prostitute who lives in a tenement and who confronts the desolation around her with what Matthews describes as "amusing irrelevancy and a laughing eye." Like Mary Kate, the girls in the early stories about unmarried women are "unpredictable, bright-eyed, witty" and often creatures of "instinct rather than intellect." By the 1950s, O'Connor's image of the Quicksilver Girls changes somewhat, and he presents them as more mature. He continues to depict them with their youthful verve; but after he had lived and taught in America and married an American woman, he began to portray women who could make choices carefully as well as carelessly because they were self-assured, informed, and capable of communicating and sharing worthwhile relationships with both men and women.

The stories about the Quicksilver Girls fall into two general categories: the first is a small, disparate group of girls who remain single by choice; the second consists of a larger, more homogeneous set of girls who are socially active, sought after by young men, and seriously looking for husbands. These two groupings suggest O'Connor's arbitrary choice rather than the actual statistics, which show that in the 1950s sixty-four percent of the Irish population was single, six percent widowed, and thirty percent married (O'Brien 29). When O'Connor's girls opt to remain single, their choices are limited, and their lives lonely: they can withdraw to a convent, emigrate to relatives abroad, or pursue one of a limited number of careers. If they choose to marry, they have the brighter prospect of companionship, security, and even love; but they usually have little guidance and often make foolish choices which O'Connor suggests will result in injury to themselves and others or in unhappy but indissoluble marriages. If, along the way, they make the risky choice of having sexual relations before marriage, they may find themselves faced with the prospects of putting unwanted children in foster homes and of guilty feelings and unpleasant revelations later. Occasionally an older unmarried sister without prospects for career or husband appears in an O'Connor story but only as a minor character who remains at home by misfortune not choice. Thus, as O'Connor's Irish Tomboys move away from childhood, they enter the "dangerous world" of adolescence.[1] As Katherine Dalsimer writes in Female Adolescence, once a woman makes a commitment, adolescence is over (Dalsimer 10).

O'Connor wrote only three stories in which the leading female character decides to

enter a convent. He seems to have been troubled by the choice, although a survey published in 1969 indicates that eighty percent of the women leaving school had at least considered some religious order as a way of life (Beale 173). The earliest of O'Connor's convent girls appears in "After Fourteen Years" (see Chapter II) written in 1929. During the "fourteen years" of the title, the religious life seems to have absorbed the young nun's identity. Her name is revealed only when she recalls that her godchild, Marie, is called after her, and she seems changed to her former boyfriend, Nicholas Coleman, who has come to visit: "her face had lost something, perhaps it was its intensity, both its roughness and its tenderness" (A/2.1 40). Although Nicholas thinks that Marie looks "happier and stronger," she tells him that at the convent she does not want to dream or to think. She dislikes anything "that disturbs the routine," and she no longer has "ambition" (46). Returning home on the train, Nicholas hears a woman's voice in his mind, but it says "nothing" (47). Marie has changed from an active, imaginative individual into a passive, prosaic member of a community. In creating a voiceless woman who lacks intensity, O'Connor implies that the choice of a convent may be both confusing and constricting.

In rewriting the story as "The Ugly Duckling" (see Chapter II), O'Connor creates a new boyfriend, Mick Courtney, who tries to explain to his former girlfriend, Nan Ryan, that in choosing the convent she is like many other people: they build such a "rich interior world" that they cannot give their whole hearts to the "real world." As Mick speaks, Nan watches him "keenly and with amusement," but she does not take him "seriously" (CS 458). Although Mick tries to give voice to Nan's story, she seems privy to a secret which even the man who loves her cannot grasp. Both convent stories bespeak a protest against the nun's life as an acceptable option. It produces unfinished lives, inexplicable feelings, and silence.

According to Harriet Sheehy, O'Connor revered the role of nuns and believed that when a woman went into a convent, she had chosen God because she could not find a man whom she could love as much (Personal interview, 14 January 1987). Thomas Flanagan expresses a similar observation: "O'Connor adored nuns: he often called them 'perfect dotes' [an Irish expression implying someone on whom one could 'dote' or bestow affection]" (Personal interview, 25 February 1993). The convent stories, however, do not seem to reflect the attitudes which Sheehy and Flanagan attribute to O'Connor. As noted earlier in reference to O'Connor's revising real life personalities to fit fiction, much of what O'Connor wrote was artistic creation woven from only a thread of reality. One must act with care when trying to

draw conclusions about what he believed, based on the stories which he crafted.

In 1966 O'Connor rewrote the convent story one last time, as "The Corkerys," in which a young girl named May MacMahon decides to enter a convent, not out of piety but because she is impressed by, and would like to be a part of, a large friendly family named Corkery, almost all of whose members have entered religious orders. Once she takes her initial vows, she is disappointed to discover that the members of the community are "merely a lot of perfectly commonplace women play-acting austerity and meditation" and that "the Catholicism she had known and believed in was dead" (CS 554). She leaves the convent and, after an illness, decides to marry the Corkery's youngest son, who is suddenly freed from the care of his widowed mother, Josephine Corkery, when she decides to enter a convent. As Mrs. Corkery tells her family, it was "what she had always wanted to do anyhow" (CS 557). May's symbolic illness, like Nan's in "The Ugly Duckling," leads to her awakening, but unlike Nan, May rediscovers the intensity of life which she had nearly abandoned and moves forward to a new life. Thus among O'Connor's women, the convent serves as a satisfactory option only for an old woman. For Josephine Corkery, it represents security and dignity: she does not have to be dependent on her son or move to the workhouse (see Chapter IV).

Another option for O'Connor's young unmarrieds is emigration. By the mid-1920s, forty-three percent of all Irish- born women (and men) were living abroad (Brown 18). The 1956 census shows that nearly 200,000 people had left Ireland in the previous five years (Beale 39). There was little to hold them. As early as 1911, George Russell predicted serious consequences as a result of Irish women's unhappiness:

> Today the starved soul of womanhood is crying out . . . for an intellectual life and for more chance of earning a living. If Ireland will not listen to her cry, its daughters will go on slipping silently away to other countries. (Beale 36)

Fifty-five years later Irish writer Edna O'Brien gave voice to her near-starved soul: "I live out of Ireland because something in me warns me that I might stop if I lived there" (144).

Despite the large numbers who were leaving, O'Connor wrote only one story about emigration; his real interest was in those who managed to keep on living in Ireland with some degree of success. His emigration story, "The Awakening," published in Dublin Magazine in July 1928, remains one of the few which has never been collected. It tells the story of Eileen, who is being sent to America to an uncle she has never seen because her older sister has returned home from a broken marriage and has literally displaced her. Like Marie in "After Fourteen Years," Eileen is given no surname and is thus further robbed of a

family identity.

The story opens with a deceptively vivid image of an excited young woman who is "all eyes, all ears" as she awakens to "the charm of living close" to the people around her ("The Awakening" 31). Nature and the city befriend her. The narrator implies that she is on the brink of a great discovery:

> It was a delicious Spring morning and the quay walls were white and shiningover the low tide. Where the bridge was, and where the river seemed to end a great hill rose up with houses flung higgledy-piggledy across it like a child's box of bricks. The mist still clung there, following the hollows of every building, but at the very top where one old farmhouse, very tiny with its tiny barn, rose sheer against the sky the mist had scattered and house and barn and a single bright, bright patch of emerald fascinated her, drawing her glance upward at every moment. (31)

Her joy is short lived, however, and she comes home to sourness and gloom. Looking back over her life, Eileen realizes that she has spent years being "indispensable" to her ailing mother, subjecting herself to "petty mortifications," and denying herself not only pleasure but pain ("The Awakening" 33). Briefly she tries to grasp "something that [can] bind [her] to the years that are gone past" and flings herself at the shy, sensitive young man who has been always somewhere in the background (37). That, too, is "only snatching at a straw." She will leave Ireland filled with regret for a desolate past.

In the opening section of "The Awakening," the narrator introduces a tone of hope which the conclusion, with all its pathos, cannot quite offset. O'Connor refuses to sentence Eileen to an empty life as Joyce does with many of his lonely unmarried women or to a union entered into merely for security as many of O'Connor's married women experience (see Chapter IV). Surging within Eileen "was still this uncanny sensation of awakening life, this capacity for absorbing emotion from every trivial incident, that excited her and went to her head like wine" ("The Awakening" 35). With that capacity, she has the potential to build a life of her own, but she will carry with her the burdens of a silent past.

In contrast to the women of his convent and emigration stories, one of O'Connor's career women stands out as the least burdened and the most clear headed of all his unmarrieds. In "The Bridal Night" (1939), Winnie Regan is "a fine big jolly girl from town," who comes to be a teacher in a remote village "of her own choice, for the liking she had for the sea and the mountains," despite the fact that she is independently wealthy with "three hundred pounds to her cheek the day she set foot in the school" (CS 20). Isolated from the

villagers because she has only "book Irish," Winnie delights in sitting out on the rocks to read and write whenever she is not in the school, and she occasionally brings students with her. Like one of the women in Emily Hancock's study, Winnie has learned to "get by in the world even if it means [being] alone" (105).

Her idyllic life becomes complicated when Denis Sullivan, a young man plagued with "the madness", falls in love with her (CS 21). At first she plays the game and tells him he is "her beau" (20). He also knows it is a game, and his mother teases him by calling Winnie "his intended" (21). Eventually, Winnie begins going to another cove to avoid Denis, and he wanders about the heath looking for her. Finally, the doctors decide that Denis must be removed to the asylum. The night before he is to go, he asks for Winnie to sleep with him. She consents despite the protests of impropriety made by his mother, and in her arms he sleeps peacefully all night. Although the title "The Bridal Night" suggests a sexual encounter, the story clearly implies that no such act takes place. Years later, as the old woman is relating her story, she marvels at the girl's kindness and the fact that the villagers all accepted her deed: "from that day to the day she left us did no one speak a bad word about her" (25).

According to Deborah Averill the story's best qualities are its "simplicity and lyricism": it takes place at sunset and ends as darkness comes on; the characters are more idealized than realistic; and the speech has the "lyrical quality of a bird" (270-271). It is also one of the most widely circulated of O'Connor's stories, having been published in four literary journals, seven major collections, and numerous paperbacks; broadcast twice on BBC; and translated into German, Danish, Swedish, and Flemish. More important for women's studies is the position to which it elevates the two women. The mad boy's mother is a "strong" old woman, who "could cart a load of seaweed or dig a field with any man" (CS 22). She overcomes years of silence to pay tribute to a brave young woman when she tells Winnie's story to a traveler twelve years after the "bridal night." Together the women risk everything for love, and they emerge whole. Most remarkable is the ability of both to play the word game, a capacity which Patricia Yaeger suggests is one of the most emancipating for women (18). The ritual pretense of calling Denis "the beau" and Winnie "the intended" and of O'Connor's mock title, "The Bridal Night," ennobles both the women and the story, and the townspeople follow their lead with their consent. As noted earlier, the grotesque in Irish literature--in this instance sleeping with a madman--is tolerable only when it serves "that

great end, the perpetuation of the human race" (Mercier 77). Because of her personal integrity, Winnie is able to acknowledge and honor the humanity which she perceives in the young man despite his illness.

"The Bridal Night" is one of the few stories which O'Connor never revised. He claimed to have written it just as he heard it, but he later dismissed it as too emotional and not really his own work since he was merely the vehicle for its telling (Matthews 155). One may argue that O'Connor's skillful use of narrative structure, however, gave the story and the women strength. The convent stories and the emigration story are told by a third-person narrator who tries to, but does not completely, reveal a woman's reasoning. In "The Bridal Night" O'Connor uses the guise of a traditional male Irish story teller who relates the events word for word as the old woman told him. He also uses this device in "The Sisters" (see Chapter V), written about the same time. In both cases the story teller/narrator is able to reproduce the sound of a woman's voice speaking to the extent that the reader can almost forget the intermediary. O'Connor's narrator, according to Denis Donoghue, "produces the story [and] discloses the truth a character could not disclose himself" (232). At this stage in his writing O'Connor may not have felt confident to speak for a young woman, but because of his close relationship with his mother and her cronies, he could hear clearly every nuance an old woman might utter. It is part of his genius that he knew instinctively how to create that effect, part of his humility that he did not always recognize his success in achieving it.

At the end of his career O'Connor again explored the subject of the independent career woman in "A Life of Your Own," published first in The Saturday Evening Post in 1965 and later in two collections and a paperback of O'Connor's stories about women, A Life of Your Own and Other Stories. The story focuses on Jane Harty, a chemist who lives in her own bungalow in a small town. Several times while she is away from home, a mentally deranged man breaks in and rummages through her possessions. Later he steals her underwear and writes, "I love you" in lipstick on the wall (Set 158). The threat of his invasion makes her feel desolate and insecure, but she later discovers that in the perverted intruder she has come up against "a loneliness deeper than her own" (162). In her marginal existence she is inevitably connected with the other marginal people of the world. Echoing John Donne, O'Connor writes, "Never again would she have a life of her own" (9).

This story and "The Bridal Night" have at least two similarities: both leading characters represent a combination of the loner and the Quicksilver Girl, and both stories deal with a

woman's encounter with a mentally disturbed man. Winnie marks her independence by walking out to the rocks to read and write; Jane claims hers by driving a "battered old car" and running off weekends without telling anyone (Set 153). Just as the villagers never say a word about Winnie's "bridal night," the townspeople respect Jane because she "didn't mind tramping down the dirty lanes" with a prescription from her pharmacy late at night (Set 154).

The stories differ, however, in that O'Connor presents Winnie and Jane as two different kinds of women. From the start Denis' mother implies that Winnie has no interest in marriage: "Well I knew it from the first day I laid eyes on her that her hand would never rock the cradle" (CS 21). She appears both complacent and self-fulfilled. By contrast, Jane is apparently very much interested in marrying but has not found the right man; she is treated "as a bit of a freak by the swanky people because she [won't] play the game and [falls] in love with unsuitable men" (Set 154).

Winnie's complacency and Jane's eccentricity result in different responses to the specific needs of the mentally ill men. Winnie is called at night, comes willingly, and quickly consents to comfort Denis. Writing with the naivete of a less experienced man, O'Connor never allows her any doubt or reluctance to nurture and empathize with the demented young man. O'Connor pictures Jane more realistically as she wrestles with her personal repugnance for the intruder until she can arrive at a state of acceptance. Jane's first reaction gives her "a sick and desolate feeling, like the touch of something dirty" (Set 154). Later she is filled with anger and remorse. She comes to terms with the problem only after she acknowledges her own loneliness. While she is talking it over with Ned Sullivan, the husband of her friend, she bursts into tears, and he takes her in his arms. She realizes that, like the intruder, she is in love with the wrong person.

Like Jane Harty, O'Connor's friend Nancy McCarthy was a chemist who lived in Cork and tried to live an independent life. Although the encounter with the madman was the experience of another woman, the personality of Nancy permeates the character of Jane, and Nancy liked to claim O'Connor wrote this story about her (Personal interview with Harriet Sheehy, 14 January 1987). Like Jane, Nancy was in love with a man she would not marry. She did eventually marry, but after she was widowed and for as long a she was "above ground"--as she liked to say-- she lived very much a life of her own in her little bungalow in Cork (Personal interview with Nancy McCarthy 3 July 1988). Like Jane, Nancy also drove a battered car, and for most of her life was affectionately considered a bit of a character by

both the villagers and the swanky people of Cork.

The only apparently successful career woman in O'Connor's stories is Dr. O'Brien, a physician and something of a Connorean "feminist." She appears in two stories as a wealthy, and therefore much sought after, woman but apparently not interested in marriage and not of much interest to O'Connor, who never gave her a first name. She is described in "The House That Johnny Built" as "a handsome woman in a white coat", "a bit bosomy," and "a shy sort of girl" who would only give you "a hasty glance" that would "blister you" (S 247). She is also known as "a bitch for her beer." When she turns down the proposal of a crusty old bachelor, Johnny Desmond, he tells her to ask her father, and she quickly informs him that "haggling between fathers is over and done with these fifty years. You wouldn't get a girl in the whole country that would let her father put a halter round her neck like that" (250). In "Lady of the Sagas," Dr. O'Brien reappears as a person of "great distinction" with "fifteen thousand" (pounds) per year, but according to Deirdre, the heroine, it would take "another five thousand" to make Dr. O'Brien a beauty (CS 255). Although Dr. O'Brien is unique in O'Connor's stories as an accomplished professional woman, she is perhaps too secure and certain of herself to interest the spokesman for the marginal people.

One group on the margin--the girls in trouble--needed a spokesman more than any other although even at this writing many of the pleas which these girls voice remain unanswered in Ireland. In Jane Harty's story, O'Connor sympathizes with a woman's need to control her life by making choices about where and how she will live, work, and play. He also points to ways society tries to limit her choices. In another group of stories he deplores the sanctions and silence which surround a woman's right to control her sexual life. In these stories O'Connor lashes out--sometimes with humor, more often with horror--at the paucity of education and the excess of legislation which hobbled young Irish women and led them to distressing consequences. He decries the Victorian prudery which prohibited women from discussing sex and left adolescent girls to satisfy their natural curiosity through gossip and experimentation. In addition he castigates the narrow-minded government and church which, despite their pious stands against extramarital sexual encounters, refused to teach a church-sanctioned attitude in support of marital sexual participation. Both institutions sought to legislate purity through prohibition and, in leaving women uninformed, denied them the chance to make satisfactory choices and terminate unsatisfactory situations. Even more than O'Connor deplores the regulations, he pities the voiceless victims of experimental

and uninformed sexual activity: the unwanted children and their guilt-ridden mothers.

In his portrait of modern Ireland in Holiday magazine, O'Connor comments with bitter irony on what he calls "The Religious Rift," the gap between the reality of the natural sexual drive and the misconception of traditional spiritual directors. Some of his short stories treat the problem with an affectionate laugh at the inevitable difficulty of being Irish, but in his nonfiction he penetrated the gloss and exposed the pain engendered by the Irish inevitability:

> Infanticide in Ireland is appallingly common, though almost from the moment a girl starts walking out with a boy she is kept under observation by the police; if she leaves the neighborhood she is shadowed and if she has a baby in another area, the police return and spread the news throughout her own town. Yet it never seems to have occurred to anybody that there is any other way of stop ping the crime. (HOL 40)

Another aspect of the "rift," O'Connor asserted, was Irish censorship which proscribed any favorable reference to birth control. In his address to the College Historical Society on February 14, 1962, at Trinity College Dublin, O'Connor took a stand against the practice of classifying birth control information as "indecent literature":

> That is not censorship of indecent literature, that is a censorship of opinion and a censorship exercised on behalf of one creed. It is class legislation because it militates against the working class while the well-to-do Catholics and the pale primrose Protestants make their own arrangements. (DUB 41)

The pathos of the stories which O'Connor creates around the lives of these victims of law is that not any female character--either unwed mother or illegitimate daughter--emerges as a whole person. Nothing in his art would allow O'Connor to rewrite the tragedies he would like to have prevented.

"News for the Church" (1945) is the earliest story in which O'Connor explores the subject. It is the account of a lighthearted young convent teacher who has her first sexual experience with one of her sister's former beaux because she is curious to find out what married women "whisper, whisper, whisper" about (S 114). When she makes her confession to Father Cassidy and he realizes that she has sought him out as a confidant rather than a confessor, he determines to rip the veil of romance off her glowing tale by drilling her with questions until she is in tears and cutting down her thrill with a pint-sized penance.

The girl is a stranger in town and never reveals her name to the priest; her anonymity reinforces her state of informational limbo. Nevertheless, the priest manages to draw out of

her a good sketch of her family background and her personal life. As with many of the Tomboys and Quicksilver Girls, her pious mother died when she was a child, and she has been brought up carelessly by her father and older sister. Forced to rely on her own resources, she proudly admits the liberties she has enjoyed. She has lied, been tipsy, and used the Holy Name in vain, but when the priest points out the social consequences--they "coarsen the character" and they "grow on you"--she gladly agrees to refrain (S 110). With the same childish boastfulness, she then tells Father Cassidy that she had "carnal intercourse with a man" because she was tired of being treated "like a blooming kid" who knew nothing about sex. Once she has found out for herself what "it" is all about, she is willing to drop it along with her minor sins: "It's all over and done with now. It's something I used to dream about, and it was grand, but you can't do a thing like that a second time" (115).

The story unfolds as a lively dialogue between the excited girl and the irate priest and has become one of O'Connor's most popular stories. His first story accepted by The New Yorker, "News For the Church" was later dramatized and translated into several languages and is often collected and anthologized. Beneath the drama, however, the story intones a severe criticism of the clergy: although the priest informs the girl that there is "no vice you could think of that gets a grip on you quicker and degrades you worse", he advises her that it is her "bounden duty to marry the man"--not for the sake of her soul but because no one will hire her if she has a baby and she may have to leave the country (S 114). The priest seems more concerned with the social aspect than the spiritual.

O'Connor's message, like Father Cassidy's, is also mixed: he depicts a girl who is resourceful and independent, but he fails to acknowledge that she forfeited some of her self-worth by succumbing to the patriarchal prescription that sexual relations confirm womanhood--like an initiation into the club of womanship (Hancock 72). Not until ten years later in "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" would O'Connor alter his stand and create a female character who could recognize that a sexual relationship is only one of many self-determining choices for a mature woman.

The response of the reading public was likewise mixed. Almost immediately after the story appeared in print, The New Yorker received a letter from a Catholic church in Brooklyn, saying that all the members of the parish were cancelling their subscriptions because the story made fun of the sacrament of penance and The New Yorker should know better. The

New Yorker responded that it stood behind its contributors and continued publishing O'Connor's stories for twenty years. O'Connor himself received a response of quite another kind. A woman who had read the story while on a plane wrote that, although she had left the church twenty years before, she was so moved by the avuncular manner and kindness of the priest, that she found the nearest Catholic church, went to confession, and was continuing regular attendance. As a result, O'Connor liked to call "News For the Church" his conversion story (Personal interview with Harriet Sheehy, 14 January 1987).

In one of O'Connor's last stories, "A Mother's Warning" (1967), another of his unmarried girls also seeks priestly aid after she has made some wrong choices. The story begins when Sheila Moriarty calls at Father Fogarty's house, introduces herself, and, over a cup of coffee, tells him that she has been blackmailed into stealing a brooch from the shop where she works and thus lured into a relationship with her boss, a married man. The story ends after Father Fogarty reprimands the boss and, in the process of defending Sheila, discovers that he, too, has been tempted by her beauty. During their first conversation Sheila tells the priest that her saintly mother warned her to be careful in the world because not every man was as good as her father, a warning which O'Connor implies concerns both priest and boss.

Sheila's good father and saintly mother are unusually idealistic parents for one of O'Connor's girls, and, as a consequence, Sheila comes across as a weak, overly sheltered girl. The nameless girl in "News for the Church" goes astray because she is unwarned but curious and only realizes her wrong when she comes to share her tidings with Father Cassidy. Although Sheila is given wise warnings and set good examples, she ignores them and has to come to a priest for help when she is in trouble and scared. In the expanded world away from the protection of home, Sheila cannot rely on her own resources; like a helpless naughty child, she needs a strong man to defend her and return the stolen goods.

If O'Connor had lived longer, he might have reworked the image of Sheila by giving her a childhood in which she could cultivate self-confidence through successful encounters and quests. Thus endowed, she might be expected to bounce back after her affair and incorporate what she has learned into her later life. As she is, Sheila makes little progress in breaking with home and proves herself lacking in self-reliance.

In another story about girls in trouble, entitled "The Weeping Children" (1961), O'Connor introduces his Quicksilver Girl, Brigid Saunders, as an Irish Catholic living outside

London with her English husband, Joe, and their first baby, Nancy. Brigid is "a wild girl with a vivacious temperament, who loved outings and parties (Set 74). The only drawback to her life is that she believes herself "trapped by a morsel of humanity" whom she sees as taking everything and giving nothing. The "morsel of humanity" turns out to be not the new baby but an illegitimate child she has left in a foster home near Cork. Brigid is terrified by the chaos she might heap on her new life by bringing the child to England, but her apparently more humane husband, when he learns that the child is in a foster home, argues that they "can't do that to a child" (81). She travels with him to Dublin, but once there she is unable to face friends and family in Cork: "I tell you, Joe, I don't give a damn what happens to the child, I'm not going down," she declares (82). Determined to carry out his duty, Joe goes on alone to Cork and finds an acquaintance to accompany him to get the child. Their quest leads them to a rough looking cottage where a widow stands in a bleak kitchen with five barelegged foster children, among them Brigid's two-year-old Marie. When Joe takes Marie away, he knows he will never forget the glimpse of the remaining four children, who are weeping, "not as real children weep, with abandonment and delight, but hopelessly as old people weep whom the world has passed by" (88).

At first reading, the story appears to be an indictment of Brigid and her heartless attitude toward Marie. As O'Connor writes in "The Outcasts" (see Chpter II), the real mothers of foster children rob their unwanted children: "you want pride to get the best out of yourself, and they, poor nubs [?], have no one to give them pride" (J/8 49). Despite Brigid's apparent callousness, one must remember that villainous or even genuinely unkind characters are so uncharacteristic of O'Connor that one can only believe he intended for Brigid, like her child Marie, to be viewed as a victim. In speaking about O'Connor's benevolent nature, William Maxwell stated, "Michael was an angel. He trusted everyone, and he never suspected anyone. He never understood why people hurt him, and he never intended to hurt anyone" (Personal interview, 7 March 1993). Girls like Brigid, O'Connor implies, develop a heartlessness when they get caught between Irish legislation and prudish society. Fear of exposure and guilt erode their native goodness.

Two rejected titles for early versions of "The Weeping Children" support such a reading. A fragmented version (A/86-a) is called "Little Girl Lost," a title O'Connor later gave to his mother's story about her life as an orphan. The lost little girl of the fragment's title resembles the abandoned Marie, but also calls to mind Hancock's "girl within," which Brigid

abandoned when she submitted to the social stigma surrounding unwed motherhood. The title of the second version (A/86-b), "Limbo," may also have dual significance. Marie is barred from a normal life through no fault of her own and is thus in a social limbo. Brigid, although presumably a consenting adult when she got pregnant, was also probably an ignorant one; in addition, she had no responsibility for the limbo which society might impose on her in the form of slight or disdain if the disgrace of her situation became known.

Several changes from the early text to the published one add further credence to the theory that O'Connor sought sympathy for Brigid. The "Limbo" version describes Brigid as "cold, chaste, [and] almost ruthless" (A/86-b 1), but the later version softens it to "wild, chaste, innocent" (CS 525). In the text of "Limbo," Brigid is "irascible" (A/86-b 2) while she is wrestling with her confession to Joe, and he has "no idea what's happened to her." In "The Weeping Children," she is "irritable," and Joe is more sympathetic towards a problem because he suspects she "is sick in her mind" (CS 527). Brigid's selfishness is another issue. In "Limbo" she declares, "It was all a miserable bloody mistake, and I don't want to have to live with the mistake for the rest of my life" (A/86-b 6). In the later version O'Connor revises Brigid's remark to show her developing concern for Joe: "I don't want you to have to live with it either" (CS 529). O'Connor also shows Joe becoming more protective of Brigid. In "Limbo" Joe explains to the old foster mother in Cork that his wife did not come to get Marie because she got sick in Dublin; in the later version he discreetly tells the old woman that his wife is ill without suggesting that she got as far as Dublin and backed out.

Even before he revised "The Weeping Children," O'Connor had addressed Brigid's inability to speak for herself: he created for her a husband who, like Mick Courtney in "The Ugly Duckling," could serve as messenger and intermediary. Unlike Nan Ryan, however, Brigid has no sanctuary where she can retrieve "the girl within" and act out a new life. Although we hear a woman's voice speaking in Brigid's unfortunate story, we suspect that she has lived in fear too long and is too scarred and scared to face the world as a whole woman.

On the opposite side of the coin would seem to be a girl who married young before she got in trouble and lived happily ever after, but O'Connor's stories, like real life, do not pretend that marriage is the "vessel to the promised land" (Hancock 72). The problem in most of O'Connor's stories is that women approach marriage like a novice at a roulette table. O'Connor, standing behind their chairs and watching, finds their risks and petty

losses humorous, but he weeps for them when they stand to lose all they have in a single round. Most young Irish girls in O'Connor's stories, like the nameless girl in "News for the Church," lack the information and guidance to make intelligent choices about mates, and they often wind up acting in their own worst interests. Over the years O'Connor experimented with the idea of the woman who married the wrong man or failed to marry the right one. As this study will show, a female character who could think about and discuss with other women what she wanted in a man did not appear in O'Connor's writing or in his life until the mid-1950s.

Rita Lomasney in "The Mad Lomasneys" represents O'Connor's earliest experiment with the story of a woman's self-inflicted wounding on the way to the altar. The story was originally published as "The Wild Lomasneys" in 1942 in The Bell. Although no early versions are extant, the story was collected several times as "The Mad Lomasneys," each time in a slightly different form. According to Matthews, the plot of the story comes from a song in Robert Schumann's Dichterliebe about a boy who loves a girl who loves a boy who loves another girl, and "in angry rebound" the first girl marries the first man who comes her way (415). In O'Connor's story, Rita is the wildest of three boisterous daughters of a middle class Catholic family with a feckless father and a pious mother, neither of whom offers much counsel. Kitty, the eldest, daughter, has "been expelled from school for writing indecent letters to a boy," and Nellie, the third daughter, is only a little bit "placider" (CS 102). When Rita falls in love with a seminarian, his mother has Rita fired from her job as a convent teacher, and her mother arranges to send Rita to a new job in England. To offset her mother's decree, Rita decides to marry the first boy who proposes to her and only later realizes that by her foolish move she has missed the chance to marry the man she has loved all along.

The personality of Rita derives from that of the Tomboy, which O'Connor was in the midst of crafting and polishing at the time. Like the young Nan Ryan, Rita Lomasney is "ugly" and withdrawn; like Brenda Regan she is "a chancer"; and like Josie Mangan she is shocking and outspoken (CS 111). To create the boy whom Rita really loved before she made her "mad" gesture, O'Connor adds to Schumann's original plot a childhood incident borrowed directly from "The Climber" in which Josie meets a prissy boy who impresses her with his family's respectability (see Chapter II). In "The Mad Lomasneys" as a result of the meeting, Rita and Ned Lowry become lifetime friends and unacknowledged sweethearts.

The story has a light, frivolous tone, and neither Rita nor either of the other girls gives the impression of being capable of sustaining a serious relationship. According to Harriet Sheehy, most of the young girls of Cork embraced courtship with no more concern than they would a parlor game, and the typical expression among them was, "I'll trade you my fella for your new umbrella" (Personal interview, 14 January 1987). Even adults in some of O'Connor's stories harbor some rather flippant ideas about marriage: in "A Sense of Responsiblilty," when the Dwyer family decides that their daughter Susie would make the best wife for Jack Cantillon, "Annie, the youngest, whom [Jack] was supposed to favor, was compensated with a blue frock" (CS 382).

Because of the unfortunate outcome of Rita's hasty decision, however, one suspects that O'Connor intended to portray the story as more disastrous than whimsical. Rita is a character whose voice and vivacity O'Connor created and recreated; when she makes her destructive move, he must have felt a great need to ease her pain. He finds the answer in fashioning a closing scene in which the two lovers can be bonded like a modern Romeo and Juliet by revealing the enduring quality of a love which neither can bear to admit or abandon. The change in title from "The Wild Lomasneys" to "The Mad Lomasneys" seems to confirm the idea that the story was more serious than comic: madness was not a topic O'Connor treated lightly. Although he probably found the story amusing when he first heard it, he may well have developed a real sympathy for Rita as a frustrated woman who is being manipulated by her beau's mother and her own, and driven to a state of near madness. Grasping at straws, like Eileen in "The Awakening," Rita suddenly intuits that marriage may be the only way she herself can define her future.

The revisions in text as they appear first in Crab Apple Jelly in 1944, later in More Stories in 1954, and finally in Collection Two in 1964 show O'Connor carefully selecting words and phrases to rescue his Quicksilver Girl by giving her a love which will sustain her through a lifetime of marriage to the wrong man, and, as in the case of Nan Ryan and Brigid Saunders, he creates a narrator who can speak for her. Near the end of the story, Rita is pregnant with her new husband's baby, and Ned has begun walking out with another girl. When Ned calls in to see Rita's parents, he finds Rita there with her sister Nellie. In the course of conversation Rita confesses that, if Ned had come first on the night she opted for marriage, she would have married him and begs him to damn her for her mistake. To keep the conversation going, she asks him about his new girl, whom she flippantly calls "Miss

What's-her-name" (CAJ 232). In the 1954 version, O'Connor intensifies Rita's emotional distress with a more caustic inquiry: "And how's little Miss Bitch?" (MS 205). In the early version Nellie metaphorically suggests that Rita has "backed the wrong horse" (CAJ 234); in the later version Nellie blurts out the painful truth: "I suppose "in the form of slight or disdain 'twas then you found out you married the wrong man" (MS 207). In all versions the narrator steps in to say that it was evident that Rita wanted Nellie present to keep from admitting what Rita did not want to say--that she loved Ned. Finally, the last time O'Connor revised the story, he found a way to release Rita from guilt:

> It was plain enough now why she needed Nellie as audience. It kept her fromsaying more than she had to say, from saying things that once said, might make her life unbearable. We all do it. Once let her say 'Ned I love you,' which was all she was saying, and he would have to do something about it, and then everything would fall in ruin about them. (C2 55-56)

The tragedy of Rita Lomasney is that, like everyone at sometime in life, she needs protection from herself. The beauty of her story is that it is everyone's story: the steps we take seeking freedom may lead to our captivity. The universality of her story moves woman's voice a little further along from the margin toward the mainstream. Women are not the only ones who make mad decisions.

By contrast, Deirdre Costello in "Lady of the Sagas" (1946) seems to relish life on the margin, and O'Connor paints a delightful portrait of her at leisure and enjoying her search for the right man, neither coerced by family nor burdened with baggage from her childhood. Although Deirdre, like Rita, is a teacher at the local convent, she knows the limits of her surroundings, and to make it bearable she creates for herself an imaginary mythic existence. Thus, while yet living in a real world where she has to hike up the neckline of her dress to avoid showing too much bosom in front of the nuns, in her personal life she tries to suspend the rules (J/14 59). Most of all, she finds it "a terrible thing to have the name of a saga heroine and have no saga hero" (MS 3). To solve her dilemma she begins to fantasize that Tommy Dodd, a young solicitor who lives in the same rooming house, has a glamorous secret past. Tommy at first resents her fantasy, but later he relents and pretends to have had a dashing love affair with a lady in Dublin. Afterward, when he confesses that he lied to live up to her expectations, she finds him "hopelessly undignified" (16). "Oh, God, for the age of the sagas!" she wails.

While the story is a clear spoof on the Quicksilver Girl and her irrationality as compared to male stability, it also suggests that O'Connor, like many scholars of Ireland's past, believed that society needs myth to make reality bearable. According to David Greene, "Myth is the cement which holds society together; when society decays, myth disappears" (Ronsley 4). Deirdre is a mythmaker much like Pegeen Mike in The Playboy of the Western World when she projects onto Christy Mahan the mythic qualities she herself would like to have (Finney 109). John Hildebidle suggests that "Deirdre's failure [to find a saga hero] may be a sign that there is something unreformable about the complacent bourgeois Ireland of Tommy Dodd" (190). O'Connor, like Synge, endows women with the creative spirit; for both writers, the "failure" of Ireland lies not in women but in the mundane men who have lost sight of their heritage.

A variety of changes in text both reinforce and contradict the idea of woman's role in restoring myth and suggest that this might be one of the stories which O'Connor never quite finished revisiting. The earliest version, published in Today's Woman in 1946 under the title of "The Lady in Dublin," places the emphasis on Tommy's imaginary lover; the shift in title to "Lady of the Sagas" suggests that O'Connor later wanted to spotlight Deirdre and her mythmaking rather than Tommy's imaginary girl friend. The first collected version, published in Traveller's Samples (1946), introduces an episode which appears nowhere else: at a Christmas concert at the convent, Deirdre wears an "ancient costume with brooch and cloak and a band of gold round her forehead, and looked like something out of another world" (TS 184). Although O'Connor may have felt later that fancy dress was out of character for his heroine, it nevertheless links her even more closely with the imaginative world of the Tomboys and their carnival atmosphere. In an uncollected manuscript version in an unpublished collection entitled The Little Town (J-14), O'Connor adds a final comment by Deirdre which suggests the power and verve of her saga sisters:

> But she couldn't tie herself for life to a man as innocent as that. It would be like not living at all. She had a feeling if she was cross with him he'd cry on her. And damn the bit of him would she marry, not if he died for her. (J/14 49)

The version concludes, however, with the narrator's postscript and a jab at woman's logic: "A lovely girl, but too much in the romantic line. No doubt she'll regret it." One might argue that this narrator, like Tommy Dodd, is too dull to appreciate myth.

A woman's tendency to make myths recurs throughout O'Connor's stories, and, as in

"The Mad Lomasneys," the mythmaking often takes the form of "wildish" scheming which backfires. In "The Masculine Principle," when the Quicksilver Girl gets tired of waiting for her dull, practical beau to save enough money to build them a house before he will marry, she runs off with his savings to London and has an affair. When she returns, he forgives her. They start walking out again, but even after she gives birth to his baby, he refuses to marry her until he has the money.

This story of a spirited girl outsmarted but loved by a wise, practical man was written in 1949 when O'Connor's first wife, Evelyn, was suing for legal separation and alimony, and O'Connor was beset with debt. Viewed as a reflection of O'Connor's personal situation, the story sends out a set of mixed messages. Jim, the boyfriend, conjurs up an image of the prudent man O'Connor would like to have been. Evelyn, the wild, unwise girl, even bears the name of O'Connor's estranged wife. Evelyn's widowed father, a small-time contractor who has a weakness for drink and envies Jim's fortitude, bears the name of Myles, O'Connor and Evelyn's real life first son, who was only eleven at the time. The baby born before the couple is married is curiously named after O'Connor and Evelyn's second son, Owen, who was not born out of wedlock. No early versions are extant, and only minor changes appear in the collections, but one may surmise that O'Connor was writing to air his pain and anger and that he added his family's names to a quirky story to give himself a good laugh and lighten his burden.

Other aspects of the story mark a change in O'Connor's attitude toward women and illegitimate children. Evelyn is very close in behavior to Rita Lomasney and Nan Ryan: "she slouched, she swore, she drank . . . and her matey air inspired fierce passions in cripples, out-of-works, and middle-aged widowers" (MS 224), but she is the only one of these girls to admit to having an illegitimate child and the only one whom O'Connor allows to be bested by a man. The plight of their son Owen, who is put in a foster home and ignored until Jim has the money to marry, represents an inexplicable shift from O'Connor's usual sympathetic attitude toward illegitimate children. Even the man of "masculine principle," Jim, receives a sharp blow when the sometimes brutal narrator notes that "he [Jim] was a worm, but at any rate he was her worm" (CS 236). Materialistic but loyal, Jim-the-worm marries a wounded woman whose quicksilver seems close to running out in a story which delivers at least a few hard times to everyone concerned.

Despite the putdowns and no doubt because of the humorous swagger, the story was accepted for publication in The New Yorker in 1950. According to Harriet Sheehy, it was O'Connor's version of The Taming of the Shrew, and both she and O'Connor thought it would have made a successful play or movie (Personal interview, 14 January 1987).

"The Sorcerer's Apprentice" is also a comic tale, but in contrast to "The Masculine Principle" it is told from the point of view of a woman who learns how to make her own choices in the world and even has the last line in the story. It was turned down by The New Yorker but published in Harper's Bazaar and later collected several times and translated into German. The published version which I use in this study is contained in Collection Two (1964). It is the last revision O'Connor made, and in it he adds to the leaner early versions rich ideas on sexuality and on communication among women and between women and men. Written in 1954, the year O'Connor married Harriet Rich (Sheehy), the base story reflects a newly found peace of mind and a new attitude toward women. It is the story of thirty-year-old Una MacDermott (the same age as Harriet at the time of their marriage) who is about to become an old maid because she cannot make up her mind to marry the stiff and proper man she has been seeing for five years. When she finally meets a much older man who is separated but not yet divorced from his first wife (as O'Connor also was when he first met Harriet) he teaches her the meaning of love. The story was originally entitled "Don Juan's Apprentice," one of O'Connor's series of "Don Juan" stories.[2] According to Harriet Sheehy, O'Connor particularly admired the title character of Mozart's Don Giovanni because he was willing to take the consequences for his actions (Personal interview, 14 January 1987). Regardless of what her lover is called, Una enlists herself as his apprentice and learns how to play his game and how to enjoy it.

The story differs from the early ones about unmarried girls in that Una is older and takes time to consider marriage carefully so that, as she puts it, she will not have to "regret it in ten years" (C2 221). She is also the first of O'Connor's Quicksilver Girls to have a close female friend who can advise her that she will never find the perfect man. "There is something wrong with every man if you look at him long enough," her friend Joan counsels (218). Joan is rare in that she shows concern for a man's feelings instead of taking the frivolous attitude of some of the other Quicksilver Girls: she cautions Una not to hurt Denis. "You're young. You have a fellow you'll probably marry. Denis has nobody," she says (223-4). In

Among Women, Bernikow writes that men do not write about friendships between women because most men do not know women have friends (120). It was late in his writing career before O'Connor began to explore what went on "among women" and how women could be sensitive to the needs of men.

Another change in this story from the early ones about unmarried girls is in the setting. In "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" O'Connor shifts the locale from the family home in which most of the Quicksilver Girls live and where parents and siblings can interfere to a casual young couple's home where Una can have support from her friend and learn about being around a man other than a father or brother. The man is Joan's husband Mick, whom O'Connor depicts wandering around with "his pajamas dangling about his crotch" (C2 217) and nestles himself in bed between Una and Joan with his hand possessively on his wife's "tummy" under her "nightdress" (219). The casual physical compatibility of Joan and Mick serves as a prelude to Una's comfortable sexual encounter with Denis.

Una is also the first of the Quicksilver Girls to outgrow her steady beau and find instead a mature relationship which appears headed for a successful marriage. Whereas most of the unmarried girls' beaux wait--sometimes disastrously--too long to show their concern and feelings, Denis, the "Sorcerer," takes the initiative to tutor Una in some of the wisdom he has accumulated about life and lead the way for a gentle bonding between the two of them. "There is no such thing as security in marriage," he tells her (C2 221). "You have to take a chance." Later he tells her that she talks "too much about sex" and that she has sex "in the head instead of where it belongs" (223). Shortly afterwards, she finds herself in bed with him, and once she gets over her shock at feeling like his "mistress" and an adulteress, she decides she is in no danger of becoming an old maid. In the end she realizes that she will leave her old beau because "every man and woman is a trade in himself, and however bad a bargain she might have in Denis [because he a married man], Denis was the only trade she knew" (234). She has found a man with whom she is at ease, and she is willing to risk a relationship.

In "A Bachelor's Story" (1955) O'Connor creates another lady whose "trade," like Deirdre's, is the legend: Madge Hale lives a real life by a set of mythic principles. This time, however, her beau rejects her, and the narrator falls in love with her afterwards. When Archie Boland, the bachelor of the title, meets Madge, an intelligent, naive young woman, on a trip to Connemara, she flatters him by her interest in his knowledge of early architecture and

later consents to cycle across Ireland with him. He promptly asks her to marry him, and, although she hesitates at first, she finally consents. After a long courtship, however, when Boland discovers that Madge is already engaged to two other men, he cuts off the relationship in a rage.

Her story is a humorous version of Gretta Conroy's and even takes place in Gretta's West Country: when Madge was young, she turned down a suitor, and he committed suicide. Thereafter she could never bring herself to refuse a proposal. Years later when Archie tells his friend, the narrator, about Madge's bizarre tale, the narrator defends Madge's irrationality as part of her charm and thereby loses his friendship with the bachelor. Like the Sorcerer, the narrator realizes that it was unimaginable to marry a woman unless there was a "danger" there (DR 110). "Every nice girl behaves as though there was a suicide in her past," he argues. "It's not easy to defend it rationally," the narrator pleads with the bachelor. But, he continues, "I think you made a fool of yourself."

"A Bachelor's Story" suggests O'Connor's unqualified admiration for quirky women and his disdain for men who spurn them. The story was published in The New Yorker in 1955, and later in several collections, and translated into German and Dutch, but no alternative versions exist. O'Connor was at the height of his career and apparently comfortable at first try with his character and his narrator, a comfort which he did not often find. Perhaps there was so much of the earlier Tomboys and Quicksilver Girls in Madge that O'Connor felt he knew her from the day he heard her story. The irony of her tale is that the narrator never meets her; he falls in love from the sound of her voice.

In two other unmarried stories written during the same time period, O'Connor adopts a less sympathetic pose and creates a brother who resembles a grown up version of the little boy narrator like Willie Jackson in "What Girls Are For," who declares that his sister Biddy and all other little girls are whining doll-dragging goody-goodies who exist only to annoy their brothers. In "The Pariah" (1956) and "Sue" (1958), Jack, the first-person narrator and a young bachelor, resents his sister Sue's beaux because they interfere with his peaceful home life after work. He also berates Sue and her female friends for what he considers their irrational attitude toward life and towards men in particular. Both stories were published in The New Yorker, and both are filled with bright witty dialogue and derisive narration at the expense of women.

In "The Pariah," narrator Jack Horgan swaggers his way through an introduction in

which he declares his dislike for his sister Sue's fellows and describes her condescendingly as "warm-hearted" and "generous" (DR 113). He finds her "intelligent so far as girl can be who has never read anything but what she found in the john." When Sue eventually meets a boy whom Jack likes, neither she nor her friends will have anything to do with him. One night the girls reveal to Jack an idea O'Connor had explored in "The Sorcerer's Apprentice": "you don't want a man to want you as a wife...you want him to want you as a mistress" (117-8). The story concludes when Terry Connolly, the suitor in question and the "pariah" of the title, goes to Dublin and brings home a beautiful girl whom he marries. Jack is delighted for his friend, but the girls are all sentimental about their old beau's marriage. The narrator weakly dismisses the girls' attitude as part of the irrationality of women: "seeing that women of Sue's kind must wear a broken heart for someone, I dare say it may as well be for one of the men they have given such a very bad time to" (125).

The story was originally entitled "Among Girls," and that version begins with a confession which O'Connor himself often made: "I have always been fascinated by girls" (A/61-a 1). The narrator's fascination, however, is frequently overshadowed by intense language and derogatory expressions: Jack "loathed" every one of his sister's suitors, and each "idiot or rascal" was more "despicable than the last" (1-2). This version concludes with Jack's scornful comment, later omitted, that "though she was a fine girl she was still a girl" (A/61-a 7).

The important aspect of this story for women's studies is O'Connor's portrayal of the girls as friends, a side of women's life which he begins to explore in the one-on-one female relationship in "The Sorcerer's Apprentice." As Louise Bernikow notes, "the world of women" is generally "unknown territory, banked by silence" (15); only well into his career did O'Connor discover it. To give voice to the group, he allows his narrator to sit in on the girls' discussions in the parlor and in the kitchen so that he knows first hand what goes on "Among Girls."

The same characters appear in another story published as "Sue" but originally called "Dreamers" and later "Magnanimous Lady." The narrator/brother is even more disdainful than in "The Pariah." "My sister, Sue," he begins in "Dreamers," "was in some ways the biggest idiot I ever met" (A/61-a 1). In the published version he remains intolerant but comes across as slightly less contemptuous: "God forgive me, I could never stand my sister's young men. Even if she had taste I should still have resented them. " (SV 130). As before, Jack is not merely irritated by the suitors, he wants to "unload" his sister, and he cannot understand

why she will not marry Harry Ridgeway when she "quite clearly was in love with him" (136). After its abrasive start, the story takes on a tender bent when Jack realizes that despite her love for Harry, Sue encourages him to marry the girl she "genuinely believes" he loves, and he commends her magnanimity (139). As in other stories, a Quicksilver Girl finishes without the man she loves. In the end Jack resembles other admiring Connorean narrators and spokesmen when he tries to ease Sue's pain and justify her choice: "Perhaps a lot of other women confuse love and admiration in the same way, and never realize that a man may love them as much for their faults as their virtues."

O'Connor experimented one other time with a group of women talking in "Music, When Soft Voices Die," published in The New Yorker, 11 January 1958. The title derives from a poem by Shelley which begins, "Music, when soft voices die/ vibrates in the memory--" and concludes, "And so thy thoughts, when thou art gone/ Love itself shall slumber on" (Shelley 94). The story, like the poem, portrays a man recalling the sound and power of a woman's voice speaking. According to Harriet Sheehy, the piece is not really a short story but instead "just a bit of music, a perfect delicate little thing based on my description of a group of secretaries in Annapolis [where she was living]" (Personal interview, 14 January 1987). Taken as an example of O'Connor's careful selection of subject matter and his skillful depiction of women's thoughts, this story seems to mark the high point of O'Connor's career as the self-acclaimed "feminist" and the "friend of women." In no other story does he honor more clearly the right of women to decide for themselves matters concerning sexual relationships, nor does he anywhere else value communication among women so highly. As a result, I would argue, this story is his most thoughtful and realistic reproduction of the sound of a woman's voice speaking.

The story itself consists of a frank dialogue among three young women as they explore the alternatives and consequences which a woman would have to consider if she got pregnant before marriage or if after marriage she discovered her husband was having an affair. The earliest version in the O'Connor Papers suggests that from his first writing O'Connor had a clear grasp both on the topics which the girls would discuss and on the three different personalities which he would give the speakers. His changes in title and narrative effect, however, reveal more than his usual efforts to "get it right"; they also imply his sensitivity to the delicate nature of a woman's sexual needs and his desire to portray those needs not through a man's voice but through the voices of the women to whom they belong.

The first version (A/52-a) is entitled "Listening to Girls" and is introduced by the listener,

Larry, a cocky young clerk and something of a comic, who recalls years before when he would sit during lunch-break absorbed in his western novels while "the three girl clerks"--Joan, Nora, and Marie--would talk "thirteen to the dozen" about things which he claims he did not understand or that bored him to tears (1). Despite his condescending remarks, Larry admits "they were unusually nice girls" and describes each of them carefully as if his knowing them well would validate the account of their talk. Joan was "masterful and warm-hearted" and spoke "all in italics"; Nora was sometimes "very sweet" and sometimes aloof; and Marie was "thin, tall and nunlike" with a "beautiful voice" that he always "associated with Cork." He continues with an equally particularized evaluation of the men with whom they are walking out as an entree to the subject of the male-female relationships which the girls discuss in the body of the story. About himself, the narrator admits that he can no longer remember a word of the western novel he was reading, but he "can hear the girls as though they were in the room with [him], still ignoring [his] presence as that of a mere kid who wouldn't understand anyhow" (2). Because the narrator recalls the girls' conversations with such clarity, one suspects that he was in reality fascinated and not at all "bored to tears," and that, like other Connorean narrators before him (such as Jack in "Sue" and "The Pariah"), he may have pretended disinterest because he was afraid to show an unmasculine interest in the trivial subject of women.

The first topic opens when Joan expresses her admiration for a friend who supports her illegitimate son in a foster home but has not seen him for twelve years. The girls respect Joan's friend for fulfilling her responsibility, but they pity the child and wonder what they would do in similar circumstances. According to Marie, there is something "wrong" with any girl who gets pregnant, but Nora responds that "there's something wrong with every girl or else she'd be a man" (A/52-a 2). Women, O'Connor seems to say here and elsewhere, are the ones who bear the responsibility for the consequences of sexual relationships, and if there were a way to "be a man" and thus evade responsibility, every woman would do it. Marie continues, saying that it is up to women to "set the standard" because they cannot expect men to do so. They briefly discuss the grim alternative of forcing a man to marry a girl and the frivolous possibility of keeping a man on the string just in case a girl gets in trouble. The talk ends seriously when Nora reminds them that there is more than the financial responsibility for an illegitimate child: there is the dread that one night the child might knock on the door or be an unidentified body found in the river.

The second conversation is among the same girls on another day and uses the same device: Joan has a friend in trouble, this time a husband who is "knocking round" with another woman (A/52-a 6). As before O'Connor focuses on woman's responsiblity to act. There must be something wrong with the wife, Marie says, and she argues that women need to keep themselves attractive. Joan, however, suggests more aggressive action and claims she would have words with the other woman or run off with another man. In the end they make a joke of it by deciding that "Nora would tell her husband to go to blazes and go off to the other woman's house with a box of chocolates to console her" (9). This version ends when, years later, Marie asks the narrator Larry if he will not be glad when he gets a girl. "Begod, I will not," he replies. "I'd sooner a horse" (10).

Despite the narrator's buffoonery, O'Connor is clearly sympathetic to the problems women face and very much aware of the failure of many men in living up to their commitments. In the second version O'Connor eliminates the listening narrator at the beginning and ending of the story and, by changing the title to "Girls Talking," he places the emphasis on the girls' act of speaking rather than on the passive effect of their being overheard. O'Connor also introduces a metaphor which unifies the story: he equates their voices to an instrumental trio in which "Joan is the first violin, Marie, with her deep, beautiful voice is the viola, and Nora, for all that her voice sounds thin and squeaky, is the cello" (A/52-b 2).

To "Girls Talking" O'Connor also adds a third topic of discussion which he later eliminates. As before, Joan initiates the dialogue: this time she has a friend who has been married for three years and has had three miscarriages. Immediately the girls begin exploring a solution to the childless marriage. They turn down adoption as "not the same" and opt to consider surrogate motherhood (A/52-b 11). As with the previous discussions, this one proceeds with a variety of alternatives: some practical, some angry, and some laughable. The argument is based on the premise that, if a woman loves her husband, she wants to have children by him. Although this portion of the story is omitted in the published version, it is worthy of examination because it shows O'Connor's sensitivity to women's feelings and his awareness of the extent of anguish involved in many of their decisions.

The girls' solutions to a couple's infertility vary depending on which partner might be unable to have children. Joan suggests asking a friend to have the baby and "facing it like a Christian" (A/52-b 12). The "it" here apparently refers to the sexual act between one's husband and one's friend. Despite the ease with which O'Connor portrays the girls exploring these personal topics, he allows them to skirt around the actual terms which they are discussing.

Marie mentions that she might find the situation easier to face if a complete stranger were having the baby. Joan notes that "doing it" with a friend's husband in order to give one's friend a baby would be like "doing something you loathe for a good purpose," and, she adds, "a lot of women have to do it" (13). Nora, as before, terminates the discussion with the remark that she would go along with it up to the last minute and then walk out. Here, the importance for women's studies is not so much the solutions as the women's act of coming out with the information and opinions. These were not women who would "whisper, whisper, whisper" about sexual matters that puzzled and confused them. They were talking freely and learning what others thought and what they themselves thought. And they were being heard.

In the final version O'Connor omits the surrogate parenting episode, but he retains the instrumental trio metaphor. He also reinstates the narrator, probably because he saw that he had done what he wanted for that group of girls talking and that a male narrator did nothing to diminish their voices. The words and thoughts of their soft voices would not die but would remain as an expression of sensible, thinking women who face a wide range of sexually related problems about which most men (and the patriarchal government and church, as well) are either unaware or uncooperative.

In the conclusion to the final version, O'Connor drops the pose of the boy who prefers a horse and allows him to state that as long as the "music of those voices lingers in my mind . . . [the girls] will never be old" (A/52-e 11). For unmarried women no issue demands voicing so clearly as their need for sexual information; few male writers were willing to explore and admit such an interest.

The study of O'Connor's stories about unmarried women shows his increasing awareness of women's issues and of women's capacity to talk about them. The Quicksilver Girl must be more than just a grown-up Tomboy; at this stage of her life she must make important and often irrevocable choices. In this "dangerous world," she is highly vulnerable. In the early stories, the Quicksilver Girls may run away rather than face difficulties, or they may make foolish choices which they live to regret. In the late stories, however, O'Connor developes a more mature young woman who is able to enter the decision-making process more responsibly and to learn from communicating with others along the way. One may argue that ultimately, O'Connor came to realize that a woman can be accountable for her own choices. Thus the Quicksilver Girls come to represent not only the bright and fluid mercury synonymous with their name, but also the Mercury from Olympus, for like the fleetfooted god they carry important messages.

Notes

[1] "Dangerous world" comes from Blake's "Infant Sorrow," which is quoted on the title page of a collection of short stories entitled Dangerous Worlds and written by Joan O'Donovan. Joan O'Donovan is the pseudonym of an English woman whose first name was Joan and whose real surname O'Connor chose never to reveal publicly. O'Connor lived with her from time to time between 1942 and 1954, and she was the mother of his son Oliver O'Donovan.

[2] Other Don Juan stories include two published works, "Don Juan Retired" and "Don Juan's Temptation," and three unpublished works all of which were working drafts of a story published as "School for Wives" (A/68.4): "Don Juan Trapped," "Don Juan Married," and "The Punishment of Don Juan."

CHAPTER IV

HARD CASES

In O'Connor's "The Landlady," two Irishmen working in England during World War II discuss the difficulties of married life and conclude that it is at best a problematic status: "You must admit that in marriage there are hard cases," MacNamara argues. "There's nothing else only hard cases," Kenefick replies. "There's no such thing as a happy marriage any more than there's such a thing as a happy family. All you can do is to make the best of what you have" (CP 151).

O'Connor wrote repeatedly about marriage, and most of his stories reflect what Kenefick suggests: "there's nothing else only hard cases." In order to focus on the nature of each "hard case," I have chosen stories which feature married women as protagonists caught in the difficult pursuit of selfhood within a relationship. I have avoided the analysis of longer stories with women in marital situations that evolve over an extended period of time and stories with a large number of primary characters involved in a series of subplots.

The hard-case marriages, when arranged chronologically, fall loosely into three categories, each of which reflects a period in O'Connor's life or a concept to which he kept returning; all of them demonstrate the way that voice operates in the lives of Irish married women. The first group consists of three of O'Connor's very early stories about abused, emotionally crippled, and unrealized women. Pathetic, voiceless peasants, they live narrow lives with neither friends nor family to advise or assist them and little hope of improving their situations. They enter into marriage to escape harsh realities and afterwards find themselves caught in brutal unions from which exit may prove a worse option. These stories were written before O'Connor was married and are reminiscent of certain unfortunate incidents in the marriage of his mother, Minnie O'Donovan. In his autobiographical volume An Only Child, O'Connor writes that his mother, who had been an orphan, refused to leave his father despite his bouts of drunkenness and brutality because "to do so she would have to take a job as a housekeeper and put [her child] in an orphanage--the one thing in the world that an orphan child could not do" (36). He also notes that his mother, like many other desperate

women, would not leave her husband because, she claimed, "he raised me from the gutter where the world threw me" (39). As Katie Donovan writes about Somerville and Ross's The Real Charlotte, for women at the turn of the century, there was "no socially sanctioned, straightforward method for a woman to improve her lot, unless through marriage" (11).

The second group of O'Connor's stories about married women consists of a set of sketches of dark, painful liaisons in which women, although more educated and cultured than those in the first group, nevertheless find themselves irrevocably bound to the wrong men, hopelessly burdened by in-laws, or inadvertently destroying their marriages by acting in their own feminine self-interests. These difficult marriages reflect O'Connor's continuing dispute with Irish social, religious, and legal traditions and, in addition, his personal difficulties in marriage and divorce. They also reflect his belief that women need a voice and an audience--something to say and someone with whom to share it.

The third group is a collection of light, often witty stories which represent O'Connor's image of the liberated woman and recall the Quicksilver Girl now beyond adolescence and wrestling to maintain her Tomboy spirit as a married woman. They also relate two other important women in O'Connor's life: the artistic, avant-garde writer Joan O'Donovan (see Chapter III, n. 1), with whom O'Connor lived in England during the second world war while he was still married to his first wife, Evelyn, and the lively, intellectually independent Harriet O'Donovan (now Sheehy), his young American wife. All three groups of stories raise the question which Margaret Higonnet poses in her study, "Fictions of Feminine Voice: Antiphony and Silence in Hardy's Tess of the d'Urbervilles": "Can a man implicated in patriarchy speak for a woman constrained by it?" (Claridge and Langland 197- 198). One of the purposes of this study is to show how, over a period of time, an affirmative answer to Higonnet's question becomes increasingly apparent in O'Connor's stories about women.

O'Connor's first attempt to speak for a married woman appears in "The Ring," a story published in 1928 in The Irish Statesman, but at this date never printed in a collection. It is the story of a nameless woman who has been locked out of her house by her drunken husband and is assisted in reentering by a young "man about town" named Philip, who is returning home at two A.M. and has taken a shortcut through "a nest of cutthroat lanes" ("The Ring" 409). At first, cursing at his "bad luck" at meeting the woman and embarrassed at the thought of the joke his friends might make of his plight, Philip gradually ceases to feel ridiculous and begins to enjoy acting the "knight errant" as he breaks a window with his

silver-headed cane, climbs through the opening, and lets the woman back into her own house. The concept of the gallant rescuer suggests the rich imaginary world which O'Connor as a boy created for himself from the books he read: as he calls it, "a child's vision of a world complete and glorified" (OC 161). The incident in reality derives from a night when his father flung the infant O'Connor and his mother out on Blarney Lane where they "shivered" most of the night until neighbors took them in to lie in blankets before the fire (OC 35).

As the gallant rescue begins, Philip issues an abrupt remark which suggests a limited attempt at both kindness and courtesy: "Been locked out?" ("The Ring" 409). "Fumbling for words," the woman begins to speak slowly. Gradually her voice starts to flow as she holds the young man's attention by her pathetic tale of love for a "saintly man" who was unwilling to marry her, followed by her marriage to a brute to escape working in a factory and her subsequent years of conjugal misery. As in many of his later stories, O'Connor devises a childhood incident which the woman can recall and relate to her rescuer and which helps to explain her choices in later life. Left an orphan, she was sent as a child to live with cousins and was always afraid of them because they had no children of their own and used to lock the door on her when they went out to work. "The Ring," along with other stories about orphaned children, reflects O'Connor's painful awareness of his own mother's loneliness and what he considered her foolish decision to marry his father merely for security. The "ring" of the title is a "big gold ring" with "jewels and all sorts on it," by which, according to the woman, she was lured to marry her brutish husband. Although she was once attracted to the ring by its beauty, over the years it has come to represent a recurring circle of entrapment which has ruled her life ever since she first accepted it.

O'Connor was apparently dissatisfied with the aristocratic male as a narrative point of view because he never repeated the character type. Philip, the man of class, is so superior to the woman of the lanes that communication seems at first impossible. He also seems out of place among the marginalized characters who populate O'Connor's work in general. Nevertheless, the device offers a structural advantage: the time which elapses while Philip overcomes his snobbish attitude toward his unpleasant task allows the woman a chance to accustom herself to him as a stranger. She is "voiceless" while she is on the street; by the time she is back in her house, the "life-like warm blood [has] crept back into her voice," and

she can commence her tale.

Ironically, neither the voice which O'Connor gives her nor the audience which he provides for her in the "knight-errant" lends her any lasting freedom ("The Ring" 409). As long as she is locked out of the house in which her husband is accustomed to dominate and batter her, she remains in a free world--even if she is only sitting on a "kerbstone" without her shawl. In this free realm, however, she is unaware of the chance to escape and remains speechless. Ironically, only after Philip breaks the window and leads her back into her prison, does she feel at ease to speak.

As her voice is the only valuable she possesses, she repays Philip with her story. For the duration of the night, she can speak, earn respect, and own dignity. When day comes, she will take her silent place in the ring of existence in which her husband will awake and again rule. When Philip leaves, he looks back into the house and sees only her face wrapped "in the cowl of the black shawl" ("The Ring" 410). With the loss of audience goes the loss of voice.

Two years later in his first collection, Guests of the Nation (1931), O'Connor presented another brutalized woman, known only as "Jumbo's Wife." Set during the Troubles of the 1920s, it is the story of an illiterate woman who unknowingly reveals to her husband's enemies his activity as an informer. Jumbo's "decent poor wife" not only lacks an essential aspect of language in that she is illiterate, but she also misuses the aspect of language which she has mastered: her oral communication (GN 30). Like the medieval poetess Liadain (see Chapter II) and many of O'Connor's married women, the fate of Jumbo's wife is "gain without gladness" (KLC 51).

When the story opens, Jumbo has left "without a word" (GN 29), and Jumbo's wife has crawled back in bed to review the shame of the previous night's bout when, in a "drunken frenzy," Jumbo had split her lip and shattered the little delft tea set she had bought. She had worked as a day laborer picking fruit to earn the four shillings and sixpence which she had spent for the set; Jumbo would have spent three times as much on a drunk. "Never before," she muses, "had she seen so clearly what a wreck he had made of her life" (30). As O'Connor knew, however, the women of the lanes were so disempowered by their ignorance that their dreams of freedom were always shortlived. At the first obstacle, they would crawl home for more brutality.

The first real sign of freedom for Jumbo's wife comes in the form of a letter with the "On-His-Majesty's-Service" stamp which she believes to be Jumbo's pension (GN 31). She de-

cides to withhold it until he gives her his week's wages, "even if he kills her" for it (GN 31). Accustomed to abuse, Jumbo's wife is herself a harsh woman, and when her little boy Johnny tries to light the fire with the newly arrived letter, she snatches it "wildly" from him and gives him a "vicious slap." Even though she cannot read, she is filled with "all sorts of pleasurable excitement" by the mere possession of a letter, and she senses that it has power. When she later realizes that this is the wrong week for the pension, she takes the letter to Pa Kenefick, who rescued her the night before when she ran screaming into the street. Because Pa Kenefick's younger brother had been taken out and killed by the police for his political activities, she believes Pa is important and can help her.

Once Kenefink and his group of Volunteers read the letter, they assure Jumbo's wife that she has done right. While she tries nervously to justify her act as the result of Jumbo's violence, they interrupt her with a warning: "If himself ask you anything, say there did ne'er a letter come" (GN 33). Eager to act on her information, they push her out the door as they assure her she has "squared her account with Jumbo."

Her encounter with Volunteers gives her a feeling of self-worth, and, despite moments of dread over Jumbo's retaliation, after two days of quietude she dreams of pulling her little family together. Then one evening she becomes aware of signs which she can understand better than words: the sound of a motor car stopping at the end of her lane and the sight of a pair of masked men. Instinctively, she bolts the door, tells Jumbo about the letter, and she boosts him up the wall to escape as he screams, "I'll have your sacred life." Although only vaguely aware that Jumbo has done something wrong, she senses danger. A pathetic loyalty rises in her as she runs like a madwoman throughout the lanes trying to subvert Volunteers who are now after her "lovely Jumbo" (38).

Shortly after the evening of the chase, Jumbo becomes ill and is confined to a government hospital in part of town she considers "unfamiliar country" (43)--not unlike the unfamiliar territory in which Jumbo's wife finds herself: she is alert to his danger, but she is uneasy about her responsibility for it and her need to protect him from it. When the Volunteers finally find Jumbo, they shoot him. To the front of his "cheap flannelette nightshirt," they tack a note on which is neatly typed one word: "SPY" (45). "They had squared her account with Jumbo at last," O'Connor writes. This time Jumbo's wife asks no one to read the message; she flings herself on his body, heedless of the streams of blood and perhaps not yet aware that without a man to support them, she and her son will have limited options: a squared account offers little security. The power of the written word comes home to penalize Jumbo's

illiterate wife.

"In the Train" is yet another story of "gain without gladness." First published in Lovat Dickson's Magazine in 1935, this was one of O'Connor's most successful early stories and was dramatized for the Abbey Theatre and the BBC and published repeatedly in O'Connor's collections and other anthologies. Helena Maguire, the protagonist, is the first of this trio of unfortunate wives to whom O'Connor gives a name and likewise the first to take steps to defend herself from the abuse of her husband. The story also shows how a closed society, dominated by a patriarchal philosophy, would try to override a woman's attempt at self-deliverance.

Taken from an actual murder account, "In the Train" is the story of a woman who has poisoned her husband because he was "old and dirty and cantankerous and a miser" (S 176). The members of the local police force and the villagers have gone from their west country town of Farrenschreet to Dublin to attend the trial. They all know that Helena murdered her husband, but they have lied for her and won her an acquittal so that they can inflict their own punishment on her. As they travel home on the train, her motive and theirs become obvious. She murdered her husband to be free from his abuse and also for the love of a man whom her family had forbidden her to see. The villagers would have condoned murder for land or money but not for liberty or love.

They also lied for her because to testify against a neighbor would be equivalent to informing. It is a village loyalty reminiscent of Lady Gregory's "The Girl at the Gaol Gate" in which a woman prefers that her son be hanged rather than be branded as an informer. Helena's real penalty, however, will be isolation: "Sure no one could ever darken her door again," one woman notes (S 172). The people have used their words in false testimony to obtain the right to force Helena to a living death of shame and silence which they seem to hope will be more painful than execution.

Their sentence is also a cruel testimony to the village logic and small-mindedness which kept women impaled in misery. "Did any of ye ever think the day would come when a woman in our parish would do the like of that?" one of the old men says as he shakes his head considering the way times have changed (S 173). It is most objectionable to them that a woman would act to preserve her integrity. "In the ease of the world people are asking more" the old man continues. He seems to realize--and to object to the fact--that people will no longer tolerate hardship as they used to do. The idea which "In the Train" presents is that

women may lead the way in breaking barriers, but they will endure much misery in the effort.

Helena brings other criticism on women as well. When O'Connor first presents her, she is alone in a cold carriage, and "the night outside [is] black and cheerless" (174). A drunken man enters her carriage, leans down and kisses her, and tells her he can see the "beauty of her nature." The narrator also notes that she is wearing "a bright blue blouse." Nothing ever comes of the kiss, but when a young woman admires the bright blue blouse and Helena admits that she bought it the night of the trial from a shop in the quays, one of the policemen is indignant. "Honour of God!" he admonishes her (177). "You should have been on your knees before the altar." "Women!" he exclaims as he moves into the next compartment. His indignation is short-lived, however, and the narrator notes that he winks at the young woman accompanying him as if to imply that he had done his responsibility by reprimanding Helena for her petty vanity. By including the blouse episode in the story, O'Connor demonstrates his empathy with women and their need for touches of beauty in their lives just as he does in "The Goldfish" (see below) when his female narrator wonders if her lover realizes how much she would like to have a new blouse when he wants to spend his spare money on books. Unlike O'Connor, the narrow-minded police officer belittles Helena for her indulgence, and his scorn shows the pain that women bear in a society in which their needs are misunderstood and thus misinterpreted.

In the concluding lines of the story, O'Connor reveals another pathetic consequence of Helena Maguire's actions. As they near the village, one of the policemen jeers at Helena that there will be one happy man in the village that night. Like most of the villagers, he believes she will have a reunion with the man she once loved. Her reply, however, implies that in reality she killed not so much to have the pleasure of a new relationship as to be relieved of the pain of the old one: "He's no more to me now than the salt sea" (S 178).

Despite the apparent finality of the village verdict, the story ends with more diffusion and duality than conclusion. Helena has made her voice heard in the community and in court, and both men and women have spoken in her behalf; but her future will be voiceless. She is pronounced innocent, but she is actually guilty of murder. The not-guilty verdict is doubly unjust because the townspeople have perjured themselves to achieve it. The townspeople are also twice wrong because they have lied and stolen the right to inflict their own punishment. Helena has killed for freedom and love and in a sense lost both. Through the story's inconclusiveness O'Connor draws his readers into the plot and makes the conclusion theirs. Not for many years would he portray women who could make decisions in their own

best interest and be confident of the outcome.

The women in the next two stories belong somewhere between the first two categories of O'Connor's married women. Neither concerns a woman who is mistreated by her husband, but both involve women who turn to silence as a defense against difficult situations. Although the two women face different types of challenges, neither is able to speak for herself at the impasse. The woman's behavior in the first story remains an enigma. In the second story, however, O'Connor creates a female narrator who, although silenced as a young woman, reclaims her voice at a later date when she states her reasons for silence and claims satisfaction with her decision.

"Michael's Wife" was published in Lovat Dickson's Magazine in 1935 and in The Best British Short Stories that same year. It is the story of an Irish-born woman who has emigrated to America with her Irish husband and returns to Ireland to visit her husband's parents. Although she stays for a long visit, she never tells them, nor does the narrator actually state, that her husband had died before she left America. It was a true story, told to O'Connor in a pub by an old man, the girl's father-in-law, who even many years later could not understand the girl's refusal to share her sorrow with him and his wife (MFS 42). Like other stories about women, this one apparently attracted O'Connor's sympathy and curiosity. It also marks a turning point in his work as the first story in which a married woman takes steps which she does not ultimately regret in the process of protecting herself.

When Annie Shea first arrives off the boat train, she has "jet-black eyes and hair" (BC 7), reminiscent of the Tomboys, but she also has "the face of a very sick woman" (1). Her illness, like the rest of her story, is shrouded in silence. Michael's mother is shocked but will not ask when she sees a scar "the length of your arm" (7) across Annie's stomach. Although the scar implies that Annie has had a miscarriage by Caesarean section, all her husband's parents know for sure is that she has come to Ireland for a recuperation. Michael's father's reaction expresses more feeling and previews a bonding which ultimately links him with his daughter-in-law. After Annie goes to bed, he creeps upstairs at night to make a sketchy inquiry as to whether she will be able to have children: "'Twon't come against you? . . . Tis a great life in a house, a child is" (11). She assures him that she will be all right, but, as in most issues in this story, neither she nor the narrator states the problem outright.

Communication proceeds awkwardly. O'Connor seems determined to allow Annie to hold on to her secret as if it were her last preserve of residual air. Michael's mother is a

woman with "a nature refined to the point of hardness" (BC 4) and though she accepts Annie with dignity, she is never quite able to "bridge the gap" between them (19). Michael's father, who takes "colour from everything about him," is warmed immediately by Annie's first embarrassed embrace, and he repeatedly offers opportunities for Annie to release her secret. Curious that Michael has not written lately, he tells her that his wife would like to hear from him more. "Don't blame Michael," Annie replies cryptically. "It isn't his fault" (13).

Annie feels "very much drawn" towards Michael's Aunt Kate and her sister, and she often walks to their home to share meals and listen to tales about Michael's youth (see Chapter V). Annie actually makes her confession about Michael's death to the aunts although she veils it in such ambiguity that they fail to perceive the message. "We had seven months together--only seven months," she tells Aunt Kate, but the old woman thinks Annie means seven months before coming back to Ireland. Later Annie admits to Aunt Kate "bitterly" that she wishes she would never see the "States" again, but again the aunt misunderstands.

Although Annie does not communicate much during the day, she repeatedly talks in her sleep. The old man awakens at night to hear her expressing "in low tones" sounds of "great joy" and "pleading" (BC 22). Then one night she screams in "three anguished mounting breaths, 'Michael! Michael! Michael!'" (25). As the old man listens, he thinks he sees the embodiment of his son summoned by Annie's "inexpressible" longings.

The old man also has inexpressible longings which he finally tries to communicate as Annie is preparing to leave:

> When he stood before the carriage door he looked at her appealingly. He could not frame the question that he looked; it was a folly he felt must pass from him unspoken; so he asked it only with his eyes, and with her eyes she answered; a look of ecstatic fulfillment. (BC 26-27)

O'Connor honors her choice of silence and creates for her instead a visual communication. She departs free from explanation and censure.

Like the old man who wondered over his daughter-in-law's reticence, O'Connor, even as a young man, puzzled about women's reasoning and their reluctance to communicate. Because he was a story teller, he liked to work out his problems in words. In the thirties after his time in prison during the Troubles, O'Connor found himself living in Cork, directing theatre productions and falling in love with his leading lady, Nancy McCarthy. Although Nancy refused to marry him, she treasured his friendship and remained his admirer until her

death in 1988. "I need hardly say that I thought him the finest person I ever had the good fortune to meet," she wrote in 1986 (Letter to the author, 23 November 1986). In 1934, when she refused his repeated proposals and instead married another man, O'Connor suffered a long period of depression. When he began to recover, he wrote a short work, "The Goldfish," in which he attempted to show Nancy that he understood her reasoning. When Nancy died in 1988, a columnist for the Cork Examiner summed up the relationship which "The Goldfish" first explored: "I suspect that for Frank O'Connor who began as a poet she began as his muse" ("Death" 2).

"The Goldfish" is unique among O'Connor's stories because it is the only published work in which he takes the persona of an adult woman. The story takes the form of a monologue spoken by an unidentified married woman to an unnamed man with whom she was once in love. As she tells it, the story is written some years after the young man has left the area to pursue his career. At the beginning the narrator/beloved makes it clear that she understood the lover better than she thinks he understood her:

> You were young, then. Young and very poor. I knew, of course, just how much that occasional half-crown for the pictures meant to you. For a shilling you could have got one of the books you coveted in the second-hand shop . . . I wondered if you guessed how much a new blouse meant to me. (81)

The story continues as she reminiscences about their courtship when they would walk around what Nancy would later call "Michael's Cork, the city which fed his creativity" (Letter to the author, 11 November 1986). Although the female narrator never mentions the name of "their city" (81) she reminds him that it was "the most musical in the United Kingdom" and that Thackeray had "said the university was worthy of ancient Athens." Savoring memories of bridges, trams, and terraces, she recalls their strolls through Italian-named sections of Cork such as "Montenotte" and "Tivoli," and down "Shandon Street" past the "Doric portico of old St. Mary's." At times, in "cafes [which] were few and unsatisfactory," they would sit and watch the "light and things that moved in the light" as though they "were being blended by silly revolving fans," and their view of life was so unlimited that they "felt like . . . goldfish in a bowl" able to see 360 degrees around themselves (106).

Once the city no longer fed the young man's creativity, his beloved knew better than he that their courtship must end. "Then came the terrible day," she remembers, when "the shining racing river and the mile of glittering roofs no longer reminded you of Florence." Looking backward, she realizes that he had grown discontented with the small town and

that, like their friend Willie, her lover needed to move out into the world. He began "to drink," to loose his "eagerness," and to become "too knowing." At this point, she takes control of their relationship with woman's traditional ploy: silence. She apparently never considers openly discussing her realization of his plight. Instead she confesses that she deliberately "began to avoid [him]" so that he would never have to compare her with a more sophisticated woman in a more cultured world. Her life would always be bounded by the "chapel and the kitchen," and one day he would "see through" her as he had already "seen through everything else" in the city. She remembers that the night he left was the first time she "knew what loneliness could be," and she recalls listening for "the shriek of the train" which would take him away and reciting his "favorite poem."

With a look at the future for both of them, O'Connor tactfully rescues the story just as it is about to turn sentimental. He portrays her as married and the mother of an "unruly family" (106). In order to depict her as reconciled to her decision but not without regret, O'Connor has his narrator confess that she "sometimes (but not often) lies awake" wondering "what it all meant," wondering if the magic of the city is still going on for other young couples, and trying to avoid encounters with too many "ghosts." He portrays himself as a famous, somewhat eccentric author: her husband, the narrator notes, reads [O'Connor's] novels and finds him "a queer fish." In reality neither character turned out as O'Connor predicts: Nancy never had children, and after her husband died, she spent the remainder of her life as a chemist, living on the outskirts of Cork (see "A Life of Your Own," Chapter III). O'Connor never realized his career as a novelist, although he achieved world-wide recognition as a short story writer.

Although O'Connor never seems to have wanted to polish "The Goldfish" and rework it from a monologue into a real short story, it remains, from a narrative point of view, a clear example of a woman's voice speaking. One reason for the successful narrative effect is that O'Connor knew Nancy better than he knew any other woman at the time except his mother, and in many ways he and Nancy were alike. They both loved the city and the arts. In addition, as William Maxwell says, "Nancy herself was a story teller who delighted in colorful words, whimsical expressions, and tall tales" (Personal interview, 7 March 1993). Anyone who knew her could imagine her saying she was "mortified" and "bolted home"

when she "looked at herself in a mirror," or hyperbolizing as "The Goldfish" closes:

> I am growing a little uncertain of this conjuring box we call a body. If the heart of a girl of eighteen began suddenly to beat as it used to do, I should not care to think of what might happen. (106)

Undoubtedly O'Connor considered that Nancy understood him better than anyone else at the time. The story may also be considered a portrait of the artist as a young man, presented through the eyes of his beloved. She would thus be the ideal choice to narrate a story about his burgeoning artistic nature, his love for Cork, and his yearning for literary success.

"The Goldfish," in addition, represents another example of O'Connor's fascination with the idea of the woman who marries the wrong man. In the concluding lines the narrator confesses that her husband "never suspects" that she lies awake wondering about the author or that she is "a bit queer" like the author himself (106). The author has remained at the center of her past and continues to hold a place in her present: like classical star crossed lovers, their lives are bound by what might have been.

On another level, "The Goldfish" is a paean to both Cork and Nancy. Although the story was published in Harpers Bazaar in 1939 and never republished, it became over the years a symbol for both the city and the woman. As the muse for one of the city's favorite artists, Nancy often read the story in public. Her last performance was on Radio Eirann at the twentieth anniversary commemoration of the death of O'Connor in March 1986.

As Nancy hoped, O'Connor left Cork and married a woman in the world of the arts: Evelyn Bowen, an actress. Their marriage, however, failed, and throughout the remainder of O'Connor's life--even after his successful second marriage--scars of bitterness would occasionally break through in his writing to darken his portrayal of women in marriage. The women in the next group of stories differ from those in the early stories in that they are the victims of mental rather than physical anguish and they are very much aware of their difficulties although, like the earlier women, they are powerless to effect a change. In each of these stories the married woman is also implicated as the partner responsible for the failure of the marriage.

"The Frying Pan" was probably told O'Connor by his good friend Father Tim Traynor and is one of several priests' tales which O'Connor once considered publishing as a collection entitled "The Collar." It is the story of a priest who comes to realize that he and the wife

of his good friend are in love with each other and that her husband would rather be a priest than married. Although the story suggests one man's unsuitability for marriage and another's for celibacy, it also points to a woman's need for more than the security of a home and children in marriage. "The Frying Pan" is one of the few stories in which O'Connor allows a married woman to voice her desire for emotional and sexual fulfilment. The story, as O'Connor first published it in a collection entitled The Common Chord in 1948, is one among several which makes a bold statement about women's rights and needs. He revised it a few years afterwards to be even more sympathetic to women. Still later he appears to have lost confidence in his first revision; in a second revision he withdrew portions of the more daring portrayal. Like women themselves, O'Connor wrestled with a way to voice their cause.

The story begins with warmth and humor through the point of view of Father Foley, whose friend Tom Whitton had first gone to seminary and then, when it came time to make the vow of celibacy, had "contracted scruples of conscience and married the principal one" (CC 177). Tom and his wife Una (the principal scruple) are Foley's only close friends in a small Irish town, and the plot revolves around two evenings when the three have dinner together, one night at the priest's, the other at the Whittons'.

In their first meeting O'Connor makes it apparent that while Father Foley enjoys Tom's company, he is also attracted to Una--and very lonely. Foley blushes when Una compliments his home movies, and when the evening is over, he wonders what life would have been "with a girl like that" (CC 182). While O'Connor portrays Tom as an angry and unpleasant man who alternates between criticizing and ignoring his wife, he creates for Una a boyish personality and appearance reminiscent of his Tomboys: "she was at the door, all in furs, her shoulders about her ears, her big, bony face blue with cold but screwed up into an amiable monkey grin" (177). In his revisions O'Connor changes the wording to "her big, bony masculine face" as if to emphasize her Tomboy nature (A/24-a 1). Like a little boy, she wanders about the room "unabashedly inquisitive" and "sits by the fire with legs crossed" (CC 178). While most of O'Connor's little girls like Josie Mangan (see Chapter II) are capable of fluent verbal manipulations, his boy/woman Una is the first of his females with a speech impediment. When Foley offers her a drink, she stammers, "Whi-hi-hi . . . I can't say the bloody word." In response he offers an alternate: "Call it malt."

As the title implies, the story is about alternatives: according to the cliche, one may go

out of a frying pan into the fire. Later in the story when Una and Father Foley begin talking about their lives, it becomes apparent that her speech is indicative of her marriage and that Foley's love is the emotional alternative she would like to adopt. Since she is married and he is a priest, that alternative represents the fatal fire as opposed to the merely unhappy frying pan existence they now have. Una's speech defect also suggests the inadequacy of all women in voicing their wishes in a man's world. Nancy McCarthy also had a tendency to stammer (although apparently on the stage she was not bothered), and O'Connor once hurt her feelings by his reference to the weakness (Personal interview, 4 July 1988). The resemblance between Una and Nancy also suggests O'Connor's continuing concern with the concept of a woman married to the wrong man. On the way home when Una holds Foley's hand and compliments him on the evening, her husband becomes "frostier and more uncouth than ever" (CC 182).

A few nights later, when Foley comes to the Whittons' to dinner, he notes the "gay and spotless", womanly appearance of the house and Tom self-consciously wearing a new tie over which they "probably quarrelled" (CC 183). After dinner Tom disagrees with Una over a meeting he wants to attend, and Foley thinks him an "uncouth bastard" for insulting his wife before a guest (185). When Una excuses herself to go upstairs for a cry, Foley follows her, and the encounter which follows reveals a delicate expression of love rare in O'Connor's work.

Although the scene contains the potential for scandal, O'Connor elevates it beyond reproach with honesty and good taste. As he enters the room, Father Foley sits down on the bed beside Una, who is crying. With the light on and the door safely ajar, they speak softly since the children, like a pair of sleeping chaperones, are in the next room. When Una explains to Foley that Tom is jealous, Foley at first thinks she has perceived and told Tom of Foley's love for her. Instead, she informs Foley that Tom is jealous because Foley is a priest; Tom despises her as "the temptation" that led him away from seminary and into marriage (188).

As the conversation continues, O'Connor suddenly permits the two lonely people a moment of tenderness and draws them together in a brief expression of physical love. Taking the lead, Una asks Foley if he is not going to kiss her and then with surprising honesty confesses, "It's a change to be kissed by someone that cares for you" (CC 187). She tells Foley that each time Tom makes love to her, "He makes it a sin . . . it's never anything

but adultery" (189). Although Foley remarks that Tom must be "unnatural," Una asserts that Tom is like many Irish men: "I'm beginning to think there are more spoiled priests than ever went to seminary" (188). As Maura Laverty writes in "Woman-Shy Irishmen," most Irish men are so conditioned by the priests and their mothers that they are "completely indifferent to sex in any shape or form" (O'Brien 59).

Above all, Una wants to feel like a respectable married woman. Ironically she tells Foley, "I feel quite respectable with you though I suppose I shouldn't" (CC 190). Becoming aware that they are veering into dangerous territory, she rises to leave but then turns "in a sudden access of joyous emotion" and throws "her arms about him." He kisses her, and she presses "her body close to him" until his head swims. Afterwards as he goes down stairs "in a state of idiotic happiness" to open the door for Tom, the words "Sin" and "Adultery" ring in his ears.

In the first revision, both men appear somewhat different. O'Connor expresses Foley's increased interest in Una by saying at the opening that "she formed the real centre of what little social life he had" (A/24-a 1). O'Connor also adds to Tom's disdain for Una when the narrator notes that "he refused to enter into an argument with his wife about subjects she knew nothing of" (4) in the same manner that Una McDermot's boyfriend in "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" belittles his girlfriend's attempts to have an opinion (see Chapter III).

In the revised love scene O'Connor adds both words and gestures which indicate that the author approved of the delicate relationship between the married woman and the priest. Once they are alone, Foley perceives an aura about Una that is "exclusively feminine" as she sits "beside him, willing him to make love to her, offering herself to his kiss" (9). Instead of saying "I want someone to make me feel respectable," she says, "I want a man" (11). Before she turns to him for their embrace, she thrusts "out her lips to him" and kisses him a second time. Afterwards as Foley goes down stairs, he no longer thinks of "Sin" and "Adultery," nor is he in a state of "idiotic happiness"; instead he is "very thoughtful," and he realizes that Tom is "a man at war with his animal nature." The agonizing, unfulfilled passion in all their lives leads him to the sober and pathetic conclusion that "the three of them, Tom, Una, and himself, would die as they had lived, their desires unsatisfied."

The third version, which appeared in Collection Two (1964), suggests that perhaps O'Connor decided he had gone too far. He terminates the love scene just after the first kiss, omits the physical embrace, and concludes with Foley's grim prediction of their futures.

When Harriet Sheehy compiled Collected Stories in 1981, however, she used the more suggestive first revision. Whatever O'Connor's reasoning for his later omission, the freedom of expression which he gives Una in the first revision marks a turning point in his mission to create a woman's voice speaking: Una Whitton is allowed to admit her love for a man other than her husband, and although she must acquiesce to the marital gridlock, she can find in their brief encounter as much self-expression as a woman in Ireland of the forties could expect. Almost fifty years after the story was first published, Irish women are still denied divorce. For a moment, however, O'Connor gives Una the courage to verbalize her desire for a better existence--and she never stammers in the love scene.

Although O'Connor recognized the limitations in a woman's life as in Una Whitton's, he also discovered a fearful power attached to the mythos of Irish womanhood, and he found himself personally in legal difficulty when he tried to obtain a divorce from his first wife. Looking back on the situation, he claimed to his second wife that no man in all Ireland had a chance when he came up against a judge who had, like most Irish men, a mother fixation: a man would always lose (Personal interview with Harriet Sheehy, 14 January 1987). Instead of dealing with his divorce with the kind of somber inconclusiveness which "The Frying Pan" reflects, he chose a comic mode. The result is a rich comedy entitled "Brief for Oedipus" (later "Counsel for Oedipus"). Underneath the mirth however, lies a painful picture of the sort of narrow, uninformed vision of the women who lived a generation prior to that of the young secretaries in "Music When Soft Voices Die": unrealized women who droned through married life so terrified of sex and so saturated with sanctity that they drowned any hope of marital fulfillment for themselves and their partners. In "Marriage-shy Irishmen," Mary Francis Keating echoes O'Connor's awareness:

> In marriage, if it occurs, the woman has to be the driving force, the seeker out of ways and means, the home finder. One knows that the worm turns, and so, from being the slighted and bullied one she becomes the bully. (O'Brien 173)

"A Brief for Oedipus" is the story of woman who is suing her husband for legal separation on the grounds of adultery and cruelty, and, as the narrator states, "whatever happens, the man has no chance" (C2 253). Although in a revised version entitled "Counsel for Oedipus," the woman and her husband are named Nellie and Tom Lynam, in the early account they are referred to merely as "Lynam" and "Mrs. Lynam," as if they were a kind of generic version of married discontent. Lynam, the defendant, is introduced first as "one of those

Irish countrymen who are deceptively gentle, who are so generous that they will give you the shirt off their back, and will then knock you unconscious over some trifling remark." His wife is "a trim, mousy little woman of about half his height and a quarter his weight, with an anxious face and a gentle, bedraggled, air." The story is narrated by one of O'Connor's expansive all-knowing male narrators, who asserts from the start that adultery has already been proven because it is known that Lynam had a child by "a woman of notorious bad character," but that cruelty might be hard to prove in "the present day decline of manliness." Before the day is out, the prediction holds true.

As the case proceeds, Kenefick, Mrs. Lynam's counsel, gradually proves that Lynam has kicked and beaten his wife and that Mrs. Lynam is "a saint as well as a martyr" (C2 256). Then to the surprise of the narrator and the observers, the case takes a turn for the defense because Mickey Joe Spillane, Lynam's counsel, proves to be "a woman hater" and thus the only man who can stand up to a judge "with a mother fixation" (257). Gradually Mickey Joe persuades the jury that the "gentle, insinuating little woman" is really a "grey, grim, discontented monster" who went to Mass without getting her husband's breakfast and made him sleep alone four years in the spare room (262). As court adjourns, Mrs. Lynam, realizing that she is beaten, grabs her handbag and "waddles" out. To the horror of his counsel, Lynam comes to the defense of his wife and opts to settle out of court. The story closes with a frustrated Mickey Joe predicting that in forty-eight hours, the mousy Mrs. Lynam will be making Lynam's life hell again.

Despite the humorous dialogue, O'Connor manages to create a beastly figure in Mrs. Lynam. She is a miserable woman, whose life offers neither joys nor accomplishments and whose role in the marriage is destructive to both partners. Nevertheless as O'Connor suggests, no Irishman can stand to see his wife's name dragged through the mud even if the testimony is true. In a case as old as Oedipus, O'Connor makes the pious but pitiful voice of Mrs. Lynam reign over her "deceptively gentle" husband. She wins her case, but her victory does little for the image of women.

Jests and jibes abound in O'Connor's verbal art, but accusations and incriminations against women were not a tolerable part of his philosophy. As he writes in An Only Child, "For me, languages had always been a form of magic, like girls, and I would as soon have thought of taking liberties with one as with the other" (250-251). The counsel for the prosecution sets out to prove that Lynam is a brute who mistreats his wife like Mick O'Donovan and

Jumbo. The counsel for the defense shifts the scene by proving that Mrs. Lynam has made Lynam's life miserable and has denied him not only basic comforts of a warm meal and happy home but also sexual relations. Her own voice works against her as the woman hater Mickey Joe uses her testimony to sway the jury in favor of his client. O'Connor's softhearted Lynam, however, comes to his wife's defense and goes against his own.

Unlike some stories where O'Connor provides strong women, in "Brief for Oedipus" he actually belittles Mrs. Lynam both by the path that Mickey Joe takes and by Lynam's rescue. Her counsel is unwilling to have her claim her rights as a human being by saying that Lynam beat her, drank too much, and had another woman. Instead, he bases her case on her physical weakness and helplessness. Lynam is the real winner because he is so magnanimous that he cannot bear to see her lose. Like other generous deeds based on emotion, Lynam's reconciliation bodes ill. The Lynams will die as they have lived: in the frying pan.

O'Connor returned repeatedly to the concept of magnanimity, as if reworking it would make it pay off. "The Unapproved Route" is a story of a magnanimous Irishman living in England who volunteers to marry a pregnant Englishwoman who has been deserted by another Irishman. Originally entitled "Magnanimity," the unpublished manuscript version (A/80-a) begins with the kind of abstract statement which O'Connor often uses to define the direction a story will take. In this story of magnanimity, the marriage will not work because no woman can really understand a man's virtuous act:

> There is one masculine virtue that is wasted on women: that is magnanimity. It isn't only wasted, it's misplaced. It's as if women had no use for it and suspected there must be something wrong with a man who indulges it. Maybe there is. (A/80-a 1)

In rewriting this story, as with others, O'Connor develops a new sensitivity to the situation, and he revises to absolve the wife and to implicate the husband.

The early version focuses on Frankie Daly, whom O'Connor makes a privileged person by giving him his own name and by describing him as "the best friend a man can have" Rosalind, a woman with no surname (until she becomes Mrs. Daly) is "just one of the crowd whom Frankie used to knock around with" (A/80-a 1). When Jim Hourigan comes over from Dublin on a job, he finds furnished lodgings with a pair of teachers; Rosalind being "the principal piece of furniture." The chauvinistic stab of ownership, like the "wasted" virtue in the proverbial opening, suggests the pro-male tone the story will take, and despite the fact that the narrator finds Hourigan a "decent fellow," the Irishman leaves Rosalind pregnant

and never writes to her although she was "an excellent correspondent" and "liked something in return."

In addition to unanswered letters, Rosalind has other problems with words. It is her roommate Kate, not Rosalind herself, who tells the crowd Rosalind is pregnant, and it is the "best friend" Frankie who rescues her from ignominy by offering her a face-saving proposal of marriage. While Frankie glibly remarks that the proposal is "better late than never" and Rosalind promises to make it up to him, the remainder of the story is shrouded with unfulfilled good intentions (A/80-a 2). As in "The Mad Lomasneys," O'Connor suggests that this marriage was spoiled from the start because Frankie was reluctant to ask Rosalind to marry him long before Jim came along. As Rosalind says, she would have married him "in a shot" if he had asked her sooner.

Once the couple is married, they appear happy; however, O'Connor makes it clear that Frankie is oblivious to the "humiliation" which Rosalind is suffering as a result of Jim's scorn:

> He didn't realize that in circumstances like those no woman can be entirely happy, even with the best man in the world, even with a man she loves. It's her nature. (A/80-a 3)

Rosalind, like her namesake in <u>As You Like It</u>, seems to be in disguise: she acts out the role of Frankie's wife while at heart she belongs to Jim as the mother of his child. Just before the baby is born, Rosalind writes Jim a letter telling him she is having the baby and that they will all be happier if it does not live. This time Jim responds and comes to England. Although Rosalind protests that she did not mean to hurt Frankie and Frankie insists that Rosalind must find out what she herself did mean, she seems unaware of her motivation. Echoing Rita Lomasney, she can only denigrate herself: "God, what sort of fool am I?" (A/80-a 5). As Rosalind is more adept with the written word than the spoken, she never discusses her final decision with her husband; Jim comes to Frankie "ashamed" (6) to say that Rosalind and the baby will come back to Ireland with him. With a strong implication of Rosalind's ingratitude, O'Connor ends the story in a brief, pathetic glimpse at the magnanimous Frankie, who "sold the cottage and returned to furnished lodgings."

In a later version, A/80-c, O'Connor changes and extends the story in what appears to be an attempt to place the responsiblity on Frankie and to excuse or at least explain Rosalind's behavior. Renamed "The Unapproved Route," this revision opens with a subjective identification of the narrator as an authoritative first-person participant: "When I lived in England I became friendly with another Irishman named Daly" (1). In this version O'Connor moves the statement on "magnanimity" to a less prominent place in the narrative when, after

Jim has come back, Frankie realizes "with a trace of bitterness" (10) that Rosalind cannot understand his motives:

> There are certain forms of magnanimity which serve between men but are misplaced in dealing with women, not because they cannot admire them but because they seem to them irrelevant to their own function in life.

Although O'Connor still seems uncertain in dealing with the topic of magnanimity, he has moved it from a "masculine virtue" to masculine policy, a form which serves "between men," and it is no longer "wasted" on women but "misplaced." That magnanimity is "irrelevant" to women's "function in life" seems to be a point which even the early version makes and one which even the last and most pro-feminine version does not eliminate: woman's "function" as mother binds her to the father and takes precedence over her love for the other man. Thus as the title implies, this version focuses on the fact that Frankie took an unapproved route in trying to marry Rosalind when she was pregnant with Jim's child. As a subplot, the idea of an unapproved route also explores another unacceptable choice which O'Connor encountered throughout his personal and literary life: the route of unwed motherhood.

In order to enhance Rosalind's status and to foreshadow her predicament, O'Connor creates a rich, warm, and somewhat obsessive personality for her as "a good-looking girl with a fat and rather sullen face, who was always up and down with some man, usually . . . of the shadiest kind" (A/80-c 1). He adds to her gifts the culinary arts: "Cooking being a form of creative activity associated with love-making, she was also an excellent cook." After she and Jim become lovers, he adds, "she simply could not be kept away from men." Despite her attraction to men, the narrator notes that Rosalind had always been mistreated by them, and as a result she marvelled at Frankie's kindness:

> Up to this, all the men she had lived with had taken advantage of her, and she had accepted it in a cynical, good-humored way as part of the price you had to pay for being too fond of them. (A/80-c 5)

Like Celia Callanan in a story O'Connor would publish some five years later, Rosalind would learn that there is no such thing as "An Out-and-Out Free Gift." The cynicism which O'Connor implies in Rosalind's willingness to pay the price for fun creeps into her letter in the form of an implication that she is paying for getting a husband: "in this life we can't expect everything" (9).

At least one expectation for Jim is fulfilled, however, when O'Connor adds the fact that the baby is a boy. Frankie passes it off "impatiently" with "Oh, a son, a son," but Jim's remark is more telling: "Christ . . . That's all that was missing" (9). The importance of a male child seems another recognition of Frankie's naivete and Jim's justification in claiming mother and child. It also suggests that O'Connor is not quite able to make Rosalind appear as competent as he might wish: she never mentions the baby's sex, nor do she and Frankie name the child. Like the responsibility for the baby's sex, the act of naming is beyond her voice and control.

O'Connor does, however, give Frankie a moment of insight into Rosalind's mind, and, as in the case of the son, O'Connor's effort to explain one aspect of a situation clouds another. As Frankie and Jim discuss Rosalind's letter, Frankie realizes that "this was a woman [he] had never known" (9). The thoughts which follow suggest not the magnanimous Frankie, who has only been married a few months, but perhaps the author himself, who had come to know the first woman he married only after their marriage was over:

> He was not the first who found that one can live with a woman for years and yet live with nothing but a shadow while the real woman goes on, unseen, unspoken -to, feeding on her vanity or lust or malice. (A/80-c 9)

Later versions omit these lines, which, O'Connor probably realized, were part of a cynical moment uncharacteristic of generally affirmative attitude toward women. While he might mention and even joke about a woman's vanity, he was rarely comfortable with a published reference to woman's feeding her "lust or malice."

Another part of this story which O'Connor omits later refers to Rosalind's inability to fathom Frankie's logic:

> She had never known before how hurt he could be, had probably not even known that he might be hurt. Women who lead such secret lives know very little of what goes on in others. (A/80-c 10)

Over and over in O'Connor's rewritings, he tries to show how difficult it is for women to identify with the needs of men. As this quote implies, O'Connor seems to believe that the woman who is unable to share her inner life, like Nan Ryan in the "Ugly Duckling," would never find fulfillment in the real world, and as a result, O'Connor probably decided that he could not give Rosalind a secret life if she was going to have a successful relationship with Jim.

In attempting to explain the outcome of the unapproved routes taken by Rosalind and Frankie, O'Connor appends a paragraph which contains a brief philosophical meditation on happiness, a concept with which he had to wrestle before he could leave it:

> As for happiness, nothing I have heard suggests that Rosalind is unhappy with Hourigan . . . Frankie's behaviour certainly leads to unhappiness, but is that not because to people like him happiness is merely an incidental, something Januar added to their lives which, being taken away, leaves them no poorer than before? Perhaps even a little richer since unlike so many of us, they can think of past happiness without remorse. (A/80-c 11)

In version A/80-e O'Connor changes "people like him" to "the Quixotes of the world" (16). In all versions when Rosalind is first awakening after delivery, she thinks she hears children playing at Hamlet. The reference to Quixote added to the children's play suggests the opening chapter in O'Connor's study of the short story The Lonely Voice entitled "Hamlet and Quixote," in which O'Connor discusses Turgenev's essay by that title about "Quixote, the madman who does the world's work while Hamlet, the thinker, merely sits back and monologizes" (LV 46). Frankie might be acceptable as a Quixote because of his ill-advised marriage, but O'Connor probably found Jim miscast as Hamlet and consequently dropped the allusion.

In the published version, O'Connor added an opening paragraph which, among other changes, clearly states that Frankie took the wrong steps when he tried to come between a woman and a man she was in love with:

> Between men and women, as between neighbouring states, there are approved roads which visitors must take. Others they take at their peril, no matter how high-minded their intentions may be. (CS 412)

No revision could fully absolve Rosalind because she did marry Frankie and leave him; nevertheless, O'Connor seems to have realized that Frankie made himself vulnerable and thus was the responsible party in the affair. Five years later he published a story entitled "Sue," which he had first entitled "Magnanimous Lady." This time he explored the concept of a girl's giving up a boy she loves so he can marry one she thinks he loves better; again the plan backfires. A man whose very nature was woven with kindness, O'Connor continued to look for it in others; but as he found in his own life and in the lives of his characters, human nature recoils at the out-and-out free gift.

Although Frankie and Rosalind follow their individual unapproved routes and end with

a failed marriage, Jim Grahame and Eileen Clery take an unapproved route together and manage to claim an amazing degree of happiness in what seems to society only "a mockery of a marriage" (CS 514). In "The Impossible Marriage" O'Connor tells the story of a pair of adult only children who are unwilling to leave their dependent widowed mothers and decide to marry but remain living in their respective parental homes. Undoubtedly the gentle irony of the situation appealed to O'Connor's sense of humor, but the story also allowed him to explore two Irish domestic problems: the plight of penurious widows and the peculiar marital discomforts which their status imposed on their adult children. The story was first published in Woman's Day in 1957, probably rejected by The New Yorker because, as William Maxwell suggests, it was a situation which Americans did not encounter.

Throughout the story both mothers refer to the "workhouse" as their inevitable lot if their children marry and leave them, but neither seriously considers that she will have to resort to such degradation. The system of workhouses and Poor Law districts, according to Dympna McLoughlin, was established by the Poor Law Act of 1838 to remove "the Irish poor on the English scene" from what the British perceived as "a threat to both wages and social order" (118). Designed more for "the diminution of pauperism" than for "the alleviation of distress", the workhouses were "grim buildings" where destitute, incapacitated, friendless women could take refuge as a last resort, but the conditions were so degrading that even the least resourceful woman might develop survival strategies rather than submit to such a fate (117). The best alternative was to enter a convent; however, only in certain instances (see "The Corkerys," Chapter V) would such entry be allowed by the church. While the horror of the workhouse lurks as a threat in many stories about older women, only in one very early story (see "Grandeur," Chapter V) does one of O'Connor's characters opt to enter a workhouse, and then only to spite her alienated children, whom she was too proud to ask for assistance.

In "The Impossible Marriage" Jim and Eileen state that they could list "a score of families where a young man or woman 'walked out' for years before he or she was in a position to marry [because they had to care for parents] and then found themselves too old or tired for [marriage]" (CS 508). After going on holiday together, however, Jim and Eileen decide not to risk losing each other and opt to "get married and go on the way [they are] going" (509). Although they know that people are talking, they also realize that they have done nothing wrong. They take great pleasure in the big bed in which Eileen sleeps with Jim like "a visitor" and from which she must "fly like Cinderella . . . at midnight to her old part as

daughter and nurse" (513). The peculiar idyll comes to a pathetic end when Jim falls ill and dies. After the funeral one of his aunts comments to Eileen that she will marry and be "happy yet," but Eileen replies with a smile which is both "knowledgeable" and "condescending" that she could "never find a husband like Jim. People can't be as happy as that a second time" (514). What Jim and Eileen give as a free gift to their mothers is repaid them by the happiness they were able to share in their not quite impossible circumstances.

Despite the plea of "happiness," a shadow of criticism hovers over the story, perhaps because, as the neighbors complained, the marriage was "a mockery": Jim and Eileen's relationship was not normal. Their situation suggests another story by O'Connor in which an overly zealous young man threatens his marriage by an overindulged sense of responsibility towards everyone except his wife. In "A Sense of Responsibility," Jim Cantillon's mother-in-law tells him that he is making a mistake to allow his "mischief-making" mother to live with him and his wife (A/69-a 8). Although in the end the mother-in-law herself makes her own brand of mischief, early in life she speaks wise words which resound in almost every story O'Connor wrote about marital problems: "Marriage is a secret between two people. 'Tis at an end when outsiders join in" (9). The story of Jim and Eileen was originally entitled "Only Children." Despite Eileen's plea of happiness and the customary delight O'Connor takes in whimsical situations, he clearly imposes a negative judgment in his change to the title "The Impossible Marriage."

Another impossible situation appears in "The Rebel," possibly the only complete story by O'Connor never published. Reminiscent of several O'Connor's English stories, "The Rebel" is the tale of Don MacNamara, an Irishman who comes to England and, like Jim Hourigan in "The Unapproved Route," becomes a popular figure in the local pub. The publican, Jim Wright, is a "thin, melancholy, obliging" man, with a "shy" wife named Carrie, who is "a tremendous worker in the way of North Country women" (A/67 1). Carrie seems "plain and stupid" until MacNamara enters, and "all at once" she comes to life and has the whole pub "in a roar." Reminiscent of Deirdre in "The Lady of the Sagas," Carrie plans a variety of romantic idylls between herself and the visitor from Ireland, but unlike Dierdre, whose fantasies are pure fiction, Carrie sees to it that hers come to fruition. Within a week everyone except Carrie's husband knows she is in love with the Irishman, but the narrator condones it as "only natural" because Carrie was not really happy (A/-67 2). She was "superior" and had a "passion for self-improvement" while her husband was only a "village

boy who never wanted to leave the village, and had no interest but in his car." In O'Connor's more successful work, he tended to rewrite such condescensions to allow readers to decide for themselves when to allot blame.

The story develops around Don, who is considered by everyone a "rebel" because he is opposed to every kind of "authority from the police to the Communist shop-stewards" (A/67 2). His principal rebellion is against everything Irish and in particular his Irish wife, "whose one conception of the duty of marriage was to make sure he didn't eat meat on Friday" (3). Carrie develops some of Don's rebelliousness and plans their affair "as if it were a military campaign." At first they meet in various villages around England, but later when Carrie's unsuspecting husband goes out of town and asks Don to look after things at the pub, Carrie decides to "play" that they are really married and to "lay out Jim's pyjamas, dressing gown and slippers" for Don (4).

While Carrie continues to "think less of deceiving her husband at home than of doing so in a hotel bedroom," Don finds the situation unsatisfactory (A/67 4). O'Connor's attempt to explain Don's reasoning represents the kind of uncharacteristic patriarchal language which anyone who studies O'Connor's revisions would expect him to change in later versions:

> There are certain things no woman ever understands in love, and one is the determination of a man like Don to pay for his girl as he would pay for anything else he regarded as his own. The idea of ownership is fixed more firmly in a man's mind than in a woman's, and ownership is as much a matter of duties as of rights. (5)

Like the idea that magnanimity is a masculine virtue wasted on women, the concept that a man has a duty to own a woman and pay for her was an idea which O'Connor's editor could not accept as typical of the author's feelings. In the margin to the typescript of "The Rebel" in the O'Connor Papers is the following message in Harriet Sheehy's handwriting: "Bill Maxwell read June 1982. Too didactic. Should not be published. Harriet Sheehy" (A/67 1).

Nevertheless the story contains some of O'Connor's usually insightful remarks about women. When Don, the lover, begins to ask Carrie's husband Jim to go walking with him, Carrie is "genuinely pleased" (A/67 6). As O'Connor writes, Carrie had "something of a woman's pleasure in bringing together husband and lover." She also seems to appeal to O'Connor's sense of humor: when Carrie's husband begins suggesting that she and Don take trips together, O'Connor writes, "Even in matters of life and death no woman gets over

her amusement at the ambiguities of daily life" (7).

The story ends when Don realizes that he is really a responsible man underneath his guise as " The Rebel." What he is rebelling against is the circumstances he deplores in Ireland, including his poor marriage. It takes Carrie to make him realize that the responsible man in him must go home because "it would be a worse tragedy if now he were to try and live out his life with a personality that was no longer his own" (8).

Despite the nobility of Carrie's gesture in sending Don back home, one might argue that she is less than a Connorean woman in some aspects. Just as Lynam in "A Brief for Oedipus" could not allow the counsel to make derogatory remarks about his wife in public, O'Connor may have decided not to rewrite the story because he felt that despite the humor, the whole affair--including the act of lending her husband's pyjamas to her lover--was beneath the dignity of a woman, even if she were married to the wrong man.

Offbeat ideas like Carrie's always appealed to O'Connor, but sometimes he had to combine them with one of his pet themes to make the experience worth the telling. "Orphans" is one such story. It is the story of a girl and an orphaned boy who is in the army. When the boy is killed at war, the girl decides to marry his brother because after his brother's death he has no one else in the world. In his autobiographical volumn An Only Child, O'Connor writes about the experience of his mother, who was left in an orphanage in Cork by her mother, and of the consequent fear and loneliness which remained with her all her life. As a result of his mother's experience, O'Connor gives the young orphan brothers something of Minnie O'Donovan's background and then reworks the character of the young girl to create the kind of sympathetic person an orphan would need. The image of woman which emerges is unusual in Connorean revisions. She begins as an innocent young girl and develops into a mature woman able to make rational decisions and to share married life with a man whom she loves. In the final version, however, O'Connor seems to rob both wife and husband of joy, as if at the last moment he decided he did not approve of their union after all.

The earliest version (A/57-a) is entitled "Orphans" and is merely a brief, incomplete piece which shows O'Connor beginning to work out an idea. He uses a first-person female narrator named Sue, who tells the story of her meeting in Dublin with a soldier named Jim, who informs her of his early life in an orphanage in Cork. When Jim tells her that his brother Larry, like Nan Ryan in "The Ugly Duckling," would get in bed with him at night against all

the rules and get punished, she suggests they should have had "women in those places, not monks" and reveals her empathetic nature which will eventually lead her to incorporate his story into her life.

In this unpolished version Sue seems rather immature: she refuses to marry Jim because she might meet someone she really cares about the next week, or if he "gets himself killed," she might have "to wear black" (A/57-a 1). After he is killed, Sue admits she was "inexperienced" and behaved "heartlessly." Like most of O'Connor's women's stories, "Orphans" shows the author's concern with a woman's need to communicate. As Sue explains, she got over the soldier's death because her fiance Jack encouraged her not to "pretend it didn't happen" but "to talk about it for hours" (2). In a very simple manner O'Connor allows his character to explore her recovery and then to handle a new situation when Jim's brother Larry comes to Dublin to visit her and the places she and Jim used to frequent. The story ends abruptly after Larry surprises Sue by proposing, and O'Connor appears not to have decided how Sue would respond. The incompleteness may also be a sign that once again O'Connor was uncomfortable with the persona of a woman; to make the form worthy of this special content dealing with orphans, he had to think about another narrator.

In version A/57-b, O'Connor moves toward completion by using a non-participating, effaced narrator. The girlfriend is renamed Marjorie and is young and immature at the start, "an only child, a little bit spoiled but with pleasant, eager manners" (1). When Jim asks her to marry him, it is her parents who are "afraid of her being left a widow so early in life," but she promises to marry him on his first leave. Later when his brother Larry proposes, her fiance Jack calls the relationship "unhealthy" (5), and she realizes that both she and Larry are attracted to the element of the deceased Jim in each other. In the end she shows signs of maturing and of preparing for a stable relationship by refusing to take Larry to places she and Jim used to visit: "People have to live their own lives" (7). The story closes with her realization that Larry still loves her only as Jim's girl, but that he will come to love her for herself. She has "taken up a challenge where she had left it before and she [will] not be beaten."

In version A/57-c, O'Connor returns to the absent mother tradition which he recognized and incorporated into his women's stories over the years (see Chapter II): Marjorie lives with her father and her aunt, and one presumes that her mother is deceased. Like the Tomboys, Marjorie seems strengthened by not having a female parent to make her decisions and is

finally able to commit to marriage. The couple visits Cork on their honeymoon to review scenes where Larry spent his youth with his brother, but Majorie knows that by the time he returns from the war, "he [will] have given up whatever it was in him that responded to the idea of death" (6).

O'Connor continued to change the story, and in version A/57-d created a mature woman who makes an unusual decision based on peculiar but plausible reasoning. He introduces a participating first-person narrator who speaks with an intellectual and emotional insight which reflects the dynamic of the girl's decision. He also changes the girl's name and personality from a gentle young Marjorie to a harsher sounding Hilda Cramer, who was "earnest," "rather humourless," and "devout and conscientious almost to a fault" (1). Finally he moves the story from Dublin to Northern Ireland in "a small, black bitter town where people drew the blinds before they touched the whiskey." The distance and coldness of the changes seem to reflect the pain which adulthood imposes on Hilda in making her choice and likewise the pain which the orphan boys experience in their emotional journeys. The story ends with an idea which O'Connor also espouses in "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" and other stories: the observation that a mature marriage is a decision which links a woman to a man in much the same way that a career choice links her to a trade. "Like all earnest people Hilda went through life looking for a cause, and now he was her cause, and she would serve him as best she knew" (9).

In the published version, O'Connor makes a few rather important alterations, beginning with the introductory paragraph which withdraws the freedom and confidence with which he had repeatedly endowed the earlier versions and seems to leave both husband and wife in another impossible marriage:

> Hilda Redmond lived across the road from us in Cork. She was a slight, fresh-complexioned woman with a long, thin face, and a nervous, eager, laughing manner. Her husband was tall and big-built, good-looking but morose; a man who you felt could never have been exactly gay. He was very attached to their two children, two little girls . . . he never spoke to me about Hilda, except once to make fun of her sense of her own inadequacy. As for Hilda, she is the sort of girl who will always feel inadequate. (DR 169)

Although time has elapsed since Hilda and her young soldier were married and they now have two children, Larry can still only relate to her as "Jim's girl." She is likewise tragic as a woman who is not fulfilled and feels inadequate in marriage.

In one last attempt to explain to himself Hilda's reasoning, O'Connor adds just before

the conclusion a stark, terrifying sentence which suggests, more than in almost any other story, a woman's complete submission to emotion over reason: "For the second time she had heard the call in the night, the scraping at the back door, and this time she would not disregard it." (13) The "scraping at the door," I would argue, is the result of conscience pangs which tell Hilda she must not leave this orphan boy alone as she did his brother. Thus she marries Larry to meet his needs and not hers, and she seems determined to continue down what may be an unapproved route despite the consequences.

One of the last stories O'Connor wrote about women and unapproved routes, "The Cheat," was also rejected for publication by The New Yorker but was published in The Saturday Evening Post 1965 about a year before O'Connor's death. Originally entitled "Betrayal," it is the story of a Protestant girl who marries a Catholic-born atheist and then destroys their marriage by converting to Catholicism without telling him. From the opening line, the narrator suggests that he is dealing with a particularly Irish Catholic topic: "Curious, the intensity people feel about religion in this country" (A/8-a 1). Nevertheless, the story goes on to make a statement about marriage and women which has universal value: "only a wife can destroy a man for only a wife can know what his essential loneliness is and hold it up to ridicule" (4). The original version does not quite clarify why Barbara's decision to convert has such a devastating effect on the marriage although the narrator clearly states that afterwards "what the marriage had been based on was utterly gone" (5). In the revised version O'Connor makes it clear that what attracts Dick as an atheist to Barbara as a Protestant is their mutual loneliness, not unlike that which formed the initial bond between Jim and Eileen in "The Impossible Marriage."

The first part of the story is devoted to building a picture of Dick Gordon, a character whom O'Connor introduces and then dismisses in "The Little Mother" and only develops fully in "The Cheat." Dick is an engineer and also one of several of O'Connor's male protagonists who claim to be atheists. When he begins walking out with Barbara, a teacher in a Protestant school who is "vaguely atheistic" and "left wing," he sweeps her off her feet because "he is the first Catholic who ever looked at her in an ordinary masculine way" (A/8-a 1).

After they are married, O'Connor notes, the "thrills stopped" (A/8-a 2) apparently because Dick is blind to a great many things, in particular the trouble he is letting himself in for because he will not commit to the church tenet that their child be brought up Catholic. "This will injure you until the day you die," his staunch Catholic brother warns. Dick, how-

ever, insists that religious dogma has been "exploded" everywhere else in the world and one day will be in Ireland. Although the narrator and many of Dick's friends warn him that he is "as big a misfit as if he had two heads" (3), he continues in his liberal disbelief. He even uses women's rights to argue his case: "Women are doing men's work and they have to live men's lives and think men's thoughts . . . Within ten or fifteen years [the church will] have to change too."

Ten years later Dick learns from a priest who comes to call on his wife that she is taking religious instruction. He takes the news stoically at first, but later he grows angry and lapses into a depression from which he never emerges. "He had been betrayed, shamelessly and treacherously, and now he was the laughing stock of the whole city" (A/8-a 4).

In the end Barbara regrets her secret conversion. She realizes that the loneliness they found in their isolation from Catholicism was one of the things which bound them and that, when she made a bond with the church, she was in essence saying that the marriage as it was did not fulfill her needs. Later she realizes that Dick had his own kind of religion--one which ritualized formal religion did not recognize but which was nevertheless a valid, private belief. As the priest says, "I wish to God I were as sure of my own salvation as I am of Dick's" (A/8-a 9).

"The Cheat" is a story written by O'Connor when he was an older man, uncertain of his own mortality and probably trying to explore his own belief without having to confess it. The story also served as a message to O'Connor's family and friends--many of them Catholic--who were then worried about his professed anti-religiosity. In this late story about women, however, O'Connor depicts Dick with a wife he (O'Connor) is glad he does not have: his Protestant wife did not convert to Catholicism nor did she betray him. As a result Harriet Sheehy claims to value this story above all others probably because she derived a better understanding of her husband, Michael O'Donovan, through the priest's assessment of Dick Gordon (Personal interview, 14 January 1987).

Most of the women in the previous group of stories find themselves coping with impossible marriages which offer little hope for change or happiness. In the next group of stories, however, O'Connor writes about women who are neither weighed down by the burdens of poverty and ignorance nor trapped by family responsibilities such as parents or unwanted pregnancies. They communicate comfortably with men and are free to make their own choices, of which marriage is only one. As a result they appear very much in touch with

the "girl within," and O'Connor gives them free rein to explore life. Despite their freedom, however, these women also may find themselves facing or living out difficult marriages. Although O'Connor seems as fascinated with the "new woman" as Nan Ryan's old chaplain is with the "new nun," he is also uncertain where the individuality of modern woman belongs in the old country society and where the traditional Irishman fits into a modern woman's life. As Declan Kiberd suggests, the best way to deal with the new attitudes towards sexuality is with a sense of playfulness which acknowledges the differences between the sexes and the limitations of each (214). In the stories which follow, O'Connor treats the complications of marriage and the new woman's attitude with a spirit of fun, and he asks his readers to enjoy a set of female characters who have the freedom to make all their own choices, even the wrong ones.

Unlike the women who are silenced by society or who select silence for protection, these women are privileged, intelligent persons who delight in speaking their minds and in acting as they please. In the first story Celia Kent is originally determined not to marry but later puts all her energy into making a success of a peculiar set of marital circumstances. In the next two stories Sheila Hennessey and Elise Colleary pursue and marry older men whose conservative spirits ultimately clash with their wives' independent wills. In the last story, published several months after O'Connor's death, Roisin Mooney learns not only to voice her own opinion but also, through the assistance of friends, to rise above the silence with which her husband would surround her. She brings to the image of married women the kind of personal and vocal fulfillment for which O'Connor seems to have been searching since he first began writing about the ladies of the lanes.

Celia Kent, "The Landlady," is an Englishwoman who is "blonde and pretty and as bold as brass" (CP 149). She is a widow with a small child, and she has a steady beau, but she says she does not believe in marriage and only wants to have a good time. As a result, Kenefick, one of her Irish lodgers and a man of "old-fashioned ideas" (150), complains that "the woman is a cow . . . a nice looking cow, but a cow just the same" (149). As noted earlier (see Chapter II), O'Connor believed that there were only two kinds of Irish women--the adventuress and the cow--and he preferred the adventuress. He devotes the remainder of the story to proving Kenefick's evaluation wrong.

According to the narrator, the three Irishmen are living at the landlady's like "rajahs," but they find themselves in a fix when she has a row with her beau and decides to

close the boarding house and go to work in a factory (CP 148). The town is "packed like a cattle-truck," and unless the lodgers get her to change her mind, they will have to take "digs" some distance away (152). First they offer to increase the rent; then they ponder kidnapping the beau. Slowly through rounds of banter, it emerges that MacNamara, one of the lodgers, is lonesome and in love with the landlady, and he suggests "for the good of the crowd" that they toss for her hand (153). The toss is won by another lodger, Long, and he courts and then marries Celia, who responds to his attention by showering him with gifts and thereby arouses envy among the other lodgers. When Celia discovers that her new husband already has a wife and children, she is devastated and says she was a fool to take the marriage seriously. The other lodgers, still worried about their accommodations, come to Long's defense and convince Celia that Long did not tell her because he thought too much of her. As a result she forgives him: "It sounds dotty to me, but if you say so I suppose I'd better go and look for him" (159). As the narrator observes of Celia, "any little compliment, no matter how silly it was, gave her pleasure."

The story is organized around the shock effect of the toss, which seems at first like a dehumanizing gesture at the expense of a woman for the mere convenience of three men, and the narrator like the reader is appalled by the "hysterics" of the idea (CP 156). Nevertheless, the narrator tries to salvage Celia from the patriarchal plot with a gratifying picture of a loving--if illogical--nurturing woman whom all the lodgers wish they had married. Despite Kenefick's remarks, Celia is not a "cow" but an "adventuress" because she is willing to be vulnerable not only by marrying Long but by seeking him out and bringing him back after he has hurt her. Like Lady Brenda, she is a "chancer." She falls in love with the man who won her in the toss and determines to make him happy (and herself in the process) despite the fact that she will have "a bloke in gaol" for a while before they settle down (160). Nevertheless, between the toss and the previous marriage, the new marriage will probably be another "hard case."

Although O'Connor appears to give Celia Kent a strong clear voice and the narrator, as in "A Bachelor's Story," falls in love with her, O'Connor may have believed "tossing for a doll" (CP 156) too unkind a cut to administer to a woman. Even after "The Landlady" was published, O'Connor was apparently not altogether satisfied with it, and he did not include it in any collection while he was living. In writing about women, O'Connor seems willing to allow them enough voice to make their own mistakes, and he supplies a rescuer whenever

possible; however, he would rarely consent to a woman's being victimized by the selfishness or swaggering of a man. As Brendon Kennelly stated in the oration he delivered at O'Connor's graveside, "Negative things formed no part of his life or outlook; his emphasis was always on the positive and the possible" (Sheehy 166).

In two other lighthearted stories O'Connor gives married women the same complete freedom in directing their lives. These stories, however, continue well into the life of the marriage and suggest that liberated women may not make the best partners. In both stories the women fall in love with and marry older men and try to direct the relationships according to their own womanly rules. In one story the wife dies; in the other she lives apart from her husband. In both O'Connor seems to suggest that women may not be entirely sure where they want to go with their newly found voices.

"Expectation of Life" is a story built on two plots both of which show a woman's attempt to control a man. In the first, Sheila Hennessey marries Jim Gaffney and spends most of their married life trying to make him take care of his health and plan for their future. When she becomes ill and it is evident that she will not live, she realizes her loss: living in the future has made a mockery of her life. The other plot concerns Sheila's first beau, Matt Sheridan, and her unwillingness to part with him even after she marries Jim. To keep him on the string, she sends him post cards from her honeymoon and eventually arranges a marriage between him and a friend of her husband. When Matt's young wife dies, Sheila torments herself with the thought that it should have been Jim who died. She also comes to another realization: she might not outlive Jim and marry Matt. O'Connor brings the two plots together after Sheila's death. Sheila's widowed husband Jim does not marry again, but he continues to go about in public and gives no impression "of a man broken down by grief." As a result, her former beau Matt, who apparently also harbored fantasies of an eventual marriage between Sheila and himself, cannot forgive Jim "his callousness" (DR 146).

According to Harriet Sheehy, when she and O'Connor were first married, she worried about him because he would not take care of himself and take his medicine as she believed he should. Finally, exasperated with her nagging, he told her he was going to write a story and "kill her off" just to get even (Personal interview, 14 January 1987). "Expectation of Life" was his mock murder story. In an early version Jim remarries six months after his wife's death, but O'Connor probably decided that he had done his bride enough harm without adding the insult of a speedy remarriage. The humor of a woman's concern about her

husband's health and their future and the irony of her death made the story instantly successful: it was published in The New Yorker in 1955, just after O'Connor's marriage to Harriet Sheehy, and was later collected in Domestic Relations (1957) and translated into German and Danish.

Although inspired by O'Connor's American wife, the married woman of this story bears a close resemblance to the Irish Tomboys and Quicksilver Girls, and she represents one of the most vocal and independent woman he created. The original version was named "The Old Maid," and the protagonist, Nora, is reminiscent of a character by the same name in "Music When Soft Voices Die": a girl who always "kept a spare part in the form of a man there to avoid the panic of imagining herself an old maid" (A/20-a 1). The story also suggests Una MacDermot in "The Sorcerer's Apprentice," who puts off marrying her steady boyfriend for ten years until everyone is sure she will be an old maid. To keep the story in the Irish vein and, as usual, to veer away from representing a real person too closely, O'Connor states, as in "The Ugly Duckling," that the protagonist was "just the type of well-courted dissatisfied girl who as often as not ends up in a convent" (A/20-c 1).

Although Sheila Hennessey shares many characteristics with previous strong females, O'Connor introduces three new traits in her which make her unique. According to her beau, Matt, Sheila wants to marry an older man because she has "a father fixation" (A/20-c 2). Earlier girls had been fathers' pets, but Sheila is the first to be designated with a relationship of this intensity, even in jest. Writing about women living in Europe in World War II, Louise Bernikow notes that "fathers not only dictated, but bombed and invaded . . . [father power] wears down a woman's strength and exhausts her spirit" (191). Like the overly strong mother figure, the overly adored father may pose a problem which O'Connor perceived in American women, a problem which made it difficult for them to accommodate to marriage. In addition to her inordinate love for her father, Sheila is also described as being "a hopelessly spoiled neurotic." While the ordinary Irish girls are more likely to have grown up fending for themselves and waiting on their brothers, Sheila has been indulged and may find giving in to another difficult. Yet another difference between Sheila and O'Connor's other women and between Sheila and her husband is that she is a thinking woman: while her husband is content to be "a superficial sort of chap" (A/21-a 4), she likes to "plumb to the depth of things" (3) and reads Jane Austen and Henry James. As O'Connor suggested to his wife when he set out to write the story, Sheila is destined to fail. Nevertheless, despite her

failure, she is free to make her own mistakes, and she marries for love not merely to elevate her status.

In "The American Wife" O'Connor expands on the image of the liberated woman, again using his own wife as a model for some of the behavior and adding to her predicament a particularly Irish set of circumstances. The story itself is one told O'Connor by a man in Cork whose American wife went home everytime she had a baby and finally ended by staying in America (Personal interview with Harriet Sheehy, 14 January 1987). Interwoven in the plot of "The American Wife" is a matter O'Connor only began to explore in "Expectation of Life": the independent woman's need to make changes in circumstances with which she is not comfortable and the traditional Irish male's reluctance to accept change. Writing about Irish women writers, Kate Donovan maintains that isolating women's works into their own category has had "the self-defeating effect of further marginalizing them from the literary mainstream" (5). In much the same manner, O'Connor suggests that women who isolate their own rights and priorities from the mainstream of their marriages end in self-defeat.

In Elsie Colleary, O'Connor creates a woman as bold as Celia Kent and as indulged and intellectual as Sheila Hennessey. She is the daughter of an Irishman who emigrated to America as a young man and made a fortune in a liquor business which he later left because it was not the "right background" for his daughter (A/3 1). She has been given the best education and grows up thinking that American men give in too much to their wives and that Irish men are more "manly," a pair of ideas that later come back to haunt her. Like most of O'Connor's women, Elsie creates a spectacle wherever she goes, and when she comes to Ireland, her cousins consider her a "mystery": she wears "high waists and wide skirts" and talks about the unwomanly subjects of politics and religion. She also falls in love with and actively pursues a thirty-five-year-old bachelor named Tom.

What she discovers in Tom is a pampered Irish male who "couldn't even go for a walk in the evening without [his mother and sisters] lining up in the hallway to present him with his hat, his gloves and his clean handkerchief" (A/3 1). In addition, Tom has a friend, Jerry, whose mother insists on putting his socks on him. Reckoning with the spoiled Irish male, however, presents less problem for Elsie than O'Connor's comic description implies. Her real difficulty lies in dealing with an another Irish male characteristic: the ability to see all the weaknesses in Ireland and the willingness to accept them as "irremediable" (10). When Tom and Jerry talk about "stupid priests and crooked politicians" (5), the American wife

asks, "Why don't you people do something about it instead of talking?" Like Deirdre, Elsie lives by a myth: the belief that the mundane is unlivable. Men like Tom and Jerry think differently:

> They belonged to . . . a handful of the middle-aged who had lived with defeat and learned fortitude and humour and sweetness, and these were the things that Elsie with her generous idealism loved in them. But she couldn't pay the price. She wanted them where she belonged herself, among the victors. (A/3 10)

O'Connor presents the concusion as a draw. Elsie goes back and forth between Ireland and America but ultimately remains in America, hoping that one day Tom will come; Tom remains in Ireland knowing that one day he may visit America but that he will always return to his native soil. The original version was entitled "A Fairy Tale" and it ends with Jerry's remark, "sometimes it all seems like a fairy tale" (A/3 2). Both the concuding line and the title were changed, possibly because O'Connor realized that unlike a fairy tale this story does not end happily ever after. It was not until his last story about a married woman that O'Connor finally perfected the sound of a woman's voice speaking and managed to couple it with a story of gain with gladness. Published in The New Yorker eight months after his death, November 5, 1966, "The School for Wives," like the previous two stories, has an interesting history. Originally, it was the story of a Don Juan who, after years of chasing women, marries a beautiful innocent girl and spends the rest of his life trying to prevent her from meeting the friends of his wild bachelor days. When O'Connor first read it to his wife, she criticized it as just another story with a double standard--one set of rules for men, another for women. "Thanks a lot," O'Connor said. "You've spoiled my story" (Personal interview with Harriet Sheehy, 14 January 1987). He put the story away for many years, but when he did revive it, the files show that he worked hard to replace the double standard with parity. In the published edition, he brings the beautiful innocent girl to maturity and wisdom through the tutelage of Don Juan's old friends and punishes Don Juan soundly for his trickery.

In an early incomplete version (A/68.4-b) entitled "Don Juan Married," a lawyer named Jack Maguire, who is "a charmer" and "as crooked as they come," marries Roisin Mooney, a "tall, thin" girl who kneels and takes his shoes off every day when he gets home from work and then gets him a drink (1). His friends are certain Jack will get tired of living with such "a saint," but instead he drops all his old friends and begins bringing curates to visit so Roisin

will think he is pure. The story ends when Jack's old friends berate him for ignoring them and Roisin starts slipping out to sip sherry with the wife of the optician next door to escape the curates. Told by a non-participating omniscient narrator, the story contains very little dialogue and allows Roisin nothing else to do but spoil her husband and keep silence.

In a later version entitled "The Punishment of Don Juan" (A/68.4-d), Don Juan's name is changed to Jimmy, a diminutive which implies a less mature person, and the story is narrated in the first person by Larry Delaney, one of the old friends Jimmy dropped. The first half of the story remains the same tale of Jimmy's sins and Roisin's saintliness. This version is completed, however, with a lively dialogue which takes place when most of Jimmy's old friends, including the narrator, are invited to sip sherry at the home of the doctor's wife and they meet Roisin. Suddenly freed from Don Juan's grip, Roisin begins "flirting like mad" and enchanting the crowd, which, over a period of time, unveils all the lies Jimmy has told her. When Jimmy discovers what has happened, he tries to tell Roisin that he is mentally unstable and that she must not cross him. As a result, she takes full responsibility for the household, treats her husband for the rest of his life like a child, and keeps on meeting the gang regularly for a drink while Jimmy stays home and prays. With Larry Delaney on her side, Roisin moves out into the real world, extablishes bonds with new friends, and, although married to an unreasonable man, she develops a rewarding life. Version A/68.4-g is the first entitled "The School for Wives" and greatly expands on the instruction which Jimmy's friends offer Roisin. It also allows her the chance to talk back to Jimmy when he tries to prevent her seeing his old girl friend: "But damn it, Jimmy . . . I don't see what there was unsuitable about it," she says (11). This version is told by a doctor to Larry Delaney, the previous narrator, and the device lends the tale an aura of folklore. Some of O'Connor's grandest women have emerged as heroines in stories treated as folk tales, such as Winnie Regan and the old woman in "The Bridal Night," and O'Connor's experimenting with Roisin's story in this vein suggests his growing awareness of her grandeur. This version concludes as the narrator confides to his friend his gentle disapproval of Jimmy's behavior: "I've never really regretted not having been a Don Juan. Have you?" (16).

In the published version, O'Connor returns to a non-participating narrator and omits the story teller's asides and comments. As a result of years of revision, O'Connor was able to refine his image of Roisin and her ability to deal with Jimmy's pretense, and she emerges as a strong woman who has established a series of rich friendships with both men and women

from her husband's past while he remains "forever alienated" (Set 217). The dialogue up until the last line reveals Roisin still asking questions about her husband's tall tales, but she has moved from the margin to which he would commit her to the mainstream of society in which she has established her place.

"The School for Wives" makes a strong conclusion for the picture of married women because O'Connor gives Roisin a strength and integrity which none of the previous married women can claim. In the early stories, the women of the lanes are hampered by their own inadequacies, mistreated by their husbands, and ultimately defeated by an unsympathetic society. In the later stories, they are encumbered by legacies and legalities from which they cannot separate themselves and which rob them of self-respect and often of social approval. In the last group of stories, O'Connor allows his women to begin ordering their own lives by making bold decisions. Finally in "The School for Wives," he empowers Roisin with the capacity to reach out beyond the confines of home and marriage and be accepted as a participating member of society despite the difficulty of her "hard case."

CHAPTER V

THE BOLD CRONES

While the Tomboys quest for adventure and new experience in life and the young unmarried and married women seek fulfillment and identification through connections, the old women in the last chapter of this study are true eccentrics both physically and emotionally and live outside or have outlived the confines of their earlier lives. A group of arthritic Amazons, they are ugly, unwanted, or impoverished old women who with "cantankerous brilliance" devise schemes to stave off poverty, achieve lifetime goals, and cope with life's inequities (Reid 141). Most have no qualms about breaking the rules. Some maiden, some maddened, and most maddening--I have named them the Bold Crones because of their age and their energy. They represent yet one more kind of woman who fascinated O'Connor, and he collected their stories and refashioned them throughout his life. The first Crone appeared in the 1920s in a small Irish journal, the last in The New Yorker in 1966 a month after O'Connor's death.

The Bold Crones were undoubtedly inspired by the colorful occupants of the neighborhood near the barracks in Cork to which O'Connor's parents moved when he was a small boy. In his autobiographical volume An Only Child, he honors three of these extraordinary women in their own chapter, appropriately entitled "I Know Where I'm Going." The first of these vivid villagers was Cockney Gertie Twomey, who married an Irish sailor, loathed everything Catholic, and spent her life scheming to get back to London. Another was Ellen Farrell, a "power maniac" (OC 100) who lived apart from her husband, had "no scruples about what a poor, friendless old lady in her position might or might not do" (99), and was a lifetime worshipper of Charles Stewart Parnell. While O'Connor was enchanted by the first two, he clearly preferred the third, Minnie Connolly, whom he describes as a "Good Shepherd" (110) with a "fierce, combative masculine intellect" (106), and he writes that he would always remember her as "a myth, a point in history at which the whole significance of human life seems to be concentrated, rather as Ellen Farrell thought of Parnell" (110).

For the purposes of this study, I have designated twelve of O'Connor's old women as Bold Crones; to each of them he gives either the leading role in her own story or a vital role in someone else's. In addition many of these women's stories include companions or sisters who are also Bold Crones. It is the mythic, Parnell-like quality of O'Connor's neighbor Minnie Connolly on which I focus in bringing the Crones together as a group. Other old women in his work pale by comparison.

Although Deborah Averill in her critical work on Irish short stories notes that "old age" (245) is among the subjects on which O'Connor writes, no critic to date has acknowledged his old women specifically as a classification, and their stories have received varying degrees of recognition. Half of them remain uncollected or only once-collected and are rarely discussed in critical reviews. Among the others, some have appeared in several collections, a few are highly acclaimed, and four were published in The New Yorker. Although O'Connor appears not to have considered making a collection of old women's stories as his journals indicate he intended for priests, children, and villagers, one may argue that, in devoting an entire chapter in his autobiography to these old women, he acknowledges the curious majesty of their presence with a special kind of collection. Moreover, one may hope that with the rising interest in women's studies, scholars may in time recognize the Bold Crones as an important submerged population group.

As a conclusion to the study of a woman's voice in the work of O'Connor, the Bold Crone stories bring both relevance and significance. Like the Tomboys, the Bold Crones have a canonical heritage: they recall primarily the Irish mythic characters such as the Hag of Beare and her sisters, but in addition, they relate to a variety of fictional characters such as Yeats' Crazy Jane, Synge's Widow Quinn, and Somerville and Ross's Charlotte. Like O'Connor's other women, most of the Bold Crones have had or continue to have some kind of relationship with a man, but unlike their younger sisters, the Bold Crones, being outside the circle of normality, are not bothered by the limitations of Irish legislation or by their own lack of education. In addition, many have productive associations with other women, and most have loud clear voices and determination which they use to get where they are going.

The Bold Crone stories fall into two groups. The early stories date from 1929 to 1936 and deal with bizarre characters whose lives and appearances have a legendary quality. All are somewhat reclusive by nature or by choice; three live with relatives; two operate small businesses; one is a spinster who later marries; and one is a widow. Most of the

women in this group seem to be members of the lower class, and many are prone to a violent, often shocking style of language and behavior, by which they recall the Bakhtinian folk law and billingsgate of the Tomboy stories. Most of the stories of the second group were written while O'Connor was teaching in America, and although they all focus on old women living in Ireland, they reflect more the cosmopolitan polish of a traveler than the provincial cant of a townsman. Among the latter, four are widows who are in some way dependent on their children, and one is attached only to the memory of a dog; the sixth is the conniving housekeeper for a Bishop. They tend to be isolated from society by their circumstances rather than by choice, and their language and behavior, for the most part, is more capricious than shocking. In addition, most belong to a higher class both socially and economically than the women of the early stories. What makes the Bold Crones unique among Connorean women, and perhaps what made them appealing to O'Connor, is the fact that, no matter what their challenges or complications, they all exit in grandeur.

The earliest Bold Crone story is "The Picture," which was published only once in The Irish Statesman in 1929 and has never been collected. It has a simple plot about an old woman named Julie Casey, who keeps a shop, and an officer from the barracks, who wants to buy a small picture from her. Julie is a "queer old soul" who lives with a "queer" aunt, and "between them they were the queerest couple you'd meet on a day's walk" (87). The only other character in the story is Julie's lodger, Gabriel O'Quinlan, a writer who is even "queerer" and gets his rooms free because Julie admires his writing. Suspicious by nature, Julie distrusts the officer when he offers her five pounds for the picture. "That's a picture of me fawther," she pretends. "I wouldn't like to sell it" (88). When he raises his bid, Julie suspects that he may be after O'Quinlan and not just the picture, and during the night she packs her lodger off to a neighbor's. The next day she remains so adamant that, when the officer raises his bid to five hundred pounds, she almost misses the chance to get a real fortune. At the last minute, however, she comes to her senses and relents: "You can have it," she says and then goes "off in a dead faint," realizing what she has almost lost.

"The Picture" is subtitled "An Old Man's Story" and is narrated by a story teller as a conversation between himself and an old man who knew Julie well. The old man together with the story teller, Julie, and her aunt are all part of the folk culture--in this instance, the surrounds of the barracks--and here, as Bakhtin suggests, all hierarchal precedence is suspended (10). Women, as a result, achieve a state of near equality since they, like the

men, play prominent roles in the folk drama. The story teller presents Julie's story as an important happening, recalling it exactly as the old man told it, and the one is as ready to tell as the other is to hear:

> 'Did I ever tell you,' the old man asked, 'how Julie Casey came in for the fortune?'
> 'No,' said I, 'but you may as well tell me now.' ("The Picture" 87)

According to O'Connor's old friend Timothy Buckley, the story teller of Gougane Barra, a good story had to have wonders. Although O'Connor prided himself on creating the sound of a character's voice, one of best sources of wonder in his Bold Crone stories lies in his physical description of the women. Julie Casey is a visual marvel with "a crop of red hair that she neither washed nor combed, and a pair of big spectacles on the end of her nose" (87). To complete the picture, O'Connor gives her "a great big mouth that used to go up and down and in and out when she was in the humour of talking," faintly reminiscent of the post office mouth of Dickens's Wemmick. O'Connor concludes his portrait with a grand, hyperbolic image of the old woman in the act of speaking: "and, God between us and all harm, she had the longest tongue and the loudest voice in the Coal Quay!" In the end it is Julie's loud voice, her ability to speak up and grab the officer's bid, which allows her to grasp a new life: with her fortune Julie sells the shop and takes a little house in the country. The other wonder in the story is the old man's realization of what an awakening Julie had and his admiration of her handling the deal:

> 'Tis a likely story!' said I [the story teller].
> 'I' faith, then,' said the old man, 'if you'd 'a done what she was near doing you'd get a weakness, too!' ("The Picture" 87)

Despite her queerness, or possibly because of it, Julie emerges a memorable sage.

The next two Bold Crones appear in "The Sisters," published only once in 1931 in O'Connor's first collection, Guests of the Nation. One of O'Connor's few mystery stories, "The Sisters" faintly resembles Poe's "The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Feather" in which a group of inmates takes over an asylum, and it also echoes Poe's premature burial stories. "The Sisters" are a pair of old women, known to have "a strain [of insanity] in the family" (GN 184). When they move to Blarney Lane in Cork, Miss Kate sets up shop but tells the villagers that she must keep "her poor mad sister," Miss Ellen, locked in the back room. When Miss Kate dies, Miss Ellen emerges, and the neighbors realize that Miss Ellen has been the sane one all along.

The topic of insanity arises several times in O'Connor's work; a trip to the nearby Cork asylum was an acceptable treatment for someone with emotional problems. According to Harriet Sheehy, in Ireland of the thirties, lonely men would occasionally commit themselves to the asylum from November to March just to avoid the cold and loneliness of the dark winter months (Personal interview, 14 January 1987). Nancy McCarthy once stated that her mother was in the Cork asylum ten times before she died (Personal interview, 3 July 1988). At least three of the women in the Bold Crone stories have been in asylums, and Denis from "The Bridal Night" is committed before the story ends. In a lighter vein, O'Connor calls a group of wild girls "The Mad Lomasneys," and, although the adjective is mostly in jest, for Rita Lomasneys it refers to a decision which is as irrational as it is unwise. In "Achilles Heel" the Bishop's housekeeper tries to discredit a revenue officer by saying he is mad like his uncle in the asylum, and she almost gets by with it. One may argue that for people who live on the margin, like most of O'Connor's population groups, insanity is always a possibility when the pressure of society becomes too intense.

Although the principal characters in "The Sisters" are female, aged, unmarried, and very much a part of the marginal society, O'Connor elevates their status and makes their story a strong women's experience. The narrative frame resembles "The Bridal Night" and the story teller who repeats his tale as an old woman told it. Here, the narrator retells the story in the words of Norah Coveny, herself a Bold Crone with "more queer stories than anyone in Cork" (184). In the character of Miss Kate, O'Connor creates a strong woman, who despite madness achieves financial independence in her shop and adeptly subdues her sister while deceiving the village. Miss Ellen, by contrast, appears at first a pitiful victim but later is recognized as a survivor. In Norah and her cronies--Bridgie Flynn and "Minnie Mac the market woman"--O'Connor constructs a sisterhood of rescuers who first suspect and then support the newcomers (Bernikow 86). Apart from the narrator's opening and closing, no male voice is heard. When the women discover the deceased sister, they call for a priest, who never arrives, and they send the policeman away after he takes a few notes, so that they can prepare the body. It is Minnie Mac who first declares that Miss Ellen is lucid.

To lead into the revelation of Miss Ellen's misfortune, O'Connor employs a series of images which create a grotesque atmosphere with a fearful set of circumstances and descriptions which alert the reader to the potential for danger. Miss Kate is perverse in appearance and behavior, a "near, tight, slim, shabby little woman with two hard lips," who would

never "invite you inside to have a cup of tea," nor was she ever "known to smile" (GN 184-185). When the women discover her dead body, it is "as cold and waxy as a three-days' corpse." When the cloistered sister emerges, Norah recalls she was the "queerest little creature you ever seen, in a white nightdress with white hair sticking out all over her head." She was "making queer sounds" and speaking in "a weeshy scared, cracked, little voice" which sounded "like a sparrow" (186). As in other early stories, O'Connor's use of the grotesque becomes what Mercier terms a means to an acceptable end (77). Both sisters are transformed: Miss Kate from deformed mind and body to corpse, Miss Ellen from premature burial to life.

In an unpublished revision (A/72-B), O'Connor eliminates the woman's voice almost completely. He replaces Norah's tale with the narrator's boyhood recollections and allows the policemen and doctor to perform every feat of strength or intelligence. In comparison with the early text, the revised version lacks richness and fertility; with the addition of logic, it also loses freedom. Miss Ellen's madness is explained away as "melancholia" over a love affair (2). Miss Kate, although "half distracted" with suffering, dresses "with a touch of coquettishness" and occasionally forgets her troubles and laughs. When Miss Ellen appears, she has lost her ghostly visage and gown and is "fully dressed" (3). In the earlier version, the exaggeration and degradation provide a carnival spectacle in which Miss Kate's law operates unchallenged and which allows us release in Miss Ellen's regeneration; without spectacle, the impact fades.

The stories also differ in conclusion. In the later version the doctor solves the mystery when he learns that Miss Kate had a bad heart, and the plot gains a masculine finality. In the early story O'Connor follows a technique he admired in Browning's "My Last Duchess": he brings the essence of a distorted life into focus just long enough to make a penetrating stab, and then dismisses it abruptly with a return to apparent normality (LV 22). Browning introduces a proud duke who implies he murdered his wife and then makes plans for a new one; O'Connor reveals that a mad woman is sane while her mad keeper is dead. The details of the Sisters' switch and captivity, like those of the Duchess's murder, remain unspoken. In conversation with Norah, the narrator asks, "And it was the other woman--Miss Kate--?" To his question, Norah confides, "Of course, it was Miss Kate!" With this feminine openness, the published version of "The Sisters" ends as it begins: a woman's story.

Another early Bold Crone appears in a strange story entitled "There Is a Lone House," published only once in an obscure journal, The Golden Book, in 1933 and not collected until

the posthumous volume,The Cornet Player Who Betrayed Ireland. It concerns a nameless older woman who lives alone and apart from the village and takes in, and eventually marries, a wandering man, younger than she and also nameless. Like other grotesque figures, the woman has a dual appearance: she looks old from a distance with a "lined" face that "rarely" smiles, but up close "youthfulness" still lingers; she also appears "to have suffered terribly in the past" (CP 16). The young man, by contrast, is pure youth and bounds down the lane, flaunting "a devil-may-care" expression (17). The narrator later reveals that the woman was abused by an uncle whom she afterwards murdered. Like Synge's Widow Quin, this woman is both physically and morally isolated and is free to form a romantic relationship as the Widow Quin does in Synge's early version (Finney 117). More intrepid than most, O'Connor's nameless woman takes the lead, but she holds it carefully, always in fear of "being moved about like a chessman" (CP 25).

In "The Sisters" the narrator hands over the story to old Norah, who controls it through her careful recollections and "queer" descriptions. By contrast, the narrator in "There Is a Lone House" drifts in and out of the scene and shifts from graphic concrete observations to agentless abstract prose. When the woman is angry, she uses "all her strength" and strikes him "across the mouth" (CP 26); when he approaches her sexually, he throws "one arm about her neck and deliberately [spills] the whiskey between her breasts" (31). At other times an obscure narrator speaks with a deferred agency as in the title, "There Is a Lone House," implying a sort of mindless movement: "there was no longer any question in his going" (30); "there was decision in it" (33); "there was more of the man in him" (35).

The relationship likewise alternates between passivity and passion in periods of separation and reunion. The young man "does messages in the village" (CP 22) for the woman, spends one evening at a wake, and later goes back to his home on a visit for an extended time. During the time when he is at the lone house, he and the woman spend their days at small tasks and their evenings drinking tea until she invites him to sleep with her. After that, she watches him at night "with something like ecstasy" only to become "the same hard quiet woman" the next day (29). During the young man's final absence, the woman notices a difference in herself, a "physical change rather than a spiritual one" (33), in which O'Connor suggests that she is both in love and pregnant: "life suddenly [begins] to stir within her" (32). On the man's return, they see a priest who consents to marry them and a doctor whom the woman pays with a very old coin. "I earned it hard," she tells him in a proud reference to her pain and endurance (38).

The woman remains in control to the end, and she has "a brightness" and "a strange other-world attraction" when she tells the doctor "with a gay laugh" that he may see more of the old coins (38). The mystery of her past, coupled with the mythic quality of her present, raises her, like O'Connor's old neighbors of the barracks, above the misery of a pathetic existence, and O'Connor implies that despite the oddities of their situation, this couple may cope with their "hard case." No revisions of this story are extant, but one can imagine that O'Connor must have liked the reclusive woman who won over the young wanderer and may have preferred not to clear the waters muddied with strangeness and sexuality lest he destroy the life-giving bacteria.

In a story published two years after "There Is a Lone House," O'Connor creates a Bold Crone as a minor character who is memorable for the energetic picture of womanhood which she adds to the story in addition to the humorous anecdote her brother takes pride in telling about her. O'Connor claimed that he wrote "Michael's Wife" just as he heard it from an old man in a pub; however, considering O'Connor's fondness for brave old women, one can imagine that he inserted the episode about Kate, the aunt of the deceased Michael, as an act of pure narrative artistry.

Aunt Kate is the stronger of a pair of sisters whom Michael's wife Annie goes to visit during her stay in Cork and one of the few people with whom Annie can converse comfortably. Like other Bold Crones, Kate is both ugly and brave:

> Kate was a rare type, tall and bony with a long face, long nose, long protruding chin and wire spectacles. Her teeth . . . had all rotted in sheer neglect. She was the sort country people describe as having a great heart. Fearless courage, intelligence and kindness go to make up the definition; Kate had all three. (94)

Her sister, Joan, seems designed by her weakness to heighten Kate's strength. Joan is a "nunlike creature" who has been in an asylum and has a "wonderfully soft, round, gentle face" (A/47.1 94). She also has "a voice that seldom rose above a whisper, and the most lovely eyes." Joan is "nominally" the postmistress, but Kate does all the work. O'Connor enhances Kate's stature further with a memorable anecdote which shows her to be both inventive and independent:

> She had gone off for an operation that was not expected to succeed, carrying a basket of eggs to sell so that she would not have her journey for nothing. Then she discovered that she had missed the bus, and walked twelve miles into Bandon rather than come back to trouble anyone for a lift. (94)

Kate is also an excellent communicator, and by her "shrewdness" she comes very close to getting Annie to share her secret (95). As they visit, Kate notes that the young couple has had nothing but separations in their life together, and she tells Annie that this is "how we grow." Kate also reveals that when Michael was a "wild" young boy, he came to her for "comfort," and she was the only one to "understand" him. In response Annie recalls that Michael had told her Kate "made a man out of him." Annie also says that she does not want to return to America.

Despite her wisdom and sympathy, Kate remains unable to perceive that Michael is dead even when Annie says, "We had seven months together--only seven months" (95). The moment is lost, and the conversation drifts to the future as Kate predicts that in two years the couple will return to Ireland.

Kate never reappears in the story after her brief episode, but she serves as a strong role model for Annie, and Annie's attraction to her hints that the young girl may adopt some of her spirit. Kate is the only one of O'Connor's Bold Crones who actually ministers to a younger generation of women, and she stands somewhat alone as both sage and mentor.

The next Bold Crone appears in a story entitled "Grandeur," which was published in 1936 in Ireland Today and, like others, remains uncollected. It opens with a shockingly humorous denunciation of women by an old man: "the only difference between one woman and another is how often and how hard she should be beat" ("Grandeur" 43). "I beat my own wife--God rest her--and she as good a woman as ever lived," he continues. In the manner of "The Picture," "Grandeur" unfolds as a conversation between a story teller and his friend, here Larry Byrne the wife-beater. The inspiration for the tale is the death of Jane Dwyer, the widow of an old friend of Larry Byrne's, and a proud, domineering old woman who had come down in the world socially and, as the story implies, might have caused less pain had she been beaten. According to the narrator, after Jane's gentle husband died, Larry Byrne tried to help her children, but Jane told him to leave them alone because he was not good enough to associate with her people. Over the years she alienated her neighbors and drove off all of her children but a daughter, Tess. After Tess died, Jane cursed the other children who came to pay their respects:

> My curse on them and the curse of the Almighty God on them, every one, and that they might never know the grace of a happy death as they'll never know the grace of a mother's blessing. ("Grandeur" 48)

When Larry Byrne tried to intervene again, she cursed him also and refused to attend the funeral. A year later, after Jane had pawned or sold everything in the house, she hired a horse and carriage, and, arrayed in "a queer, flouncy, old-fashioned dress the colour of violets and a hat like a hearse," she departed for the workhouse (50). Like other Bold Crones she knows where she is going, and she gets there. Perhaps because of the "style she arrived in," they put her in the asylum in a month, and in a year she was dead. The story closes with the same open-endedness as "The Sisters." "And her children?" the friend asks. "Not one," the wife-beater replies. O'Connor leaves his readers to ponder the curious intellect which would lead to such behavior and allows them to claim that part of the story as their own.

The title, "Grandeur," refers to Jane's claim to a lofty heritage and later to her mode of departure. It also recalls the Tomboy, Lady Brenda, and the "intervals of nonsense" which would rise up in her, a kind of "madness" which would cause her to revert to "the gentility of some deceased old grand-aunt" who had "aspirations toward higher things" (J/15 77). Because Jane has such a strong voice and such a fierce nature, her delusions of grandeur are more closely related to madness and much more destructive than Lady Brenda's. Reminiscent of Yeats's Cathleen ni Houlihan and Joyce's old sow that eats her farrow, Jane annihilates her family as a physical unit and attempts to extinguish it spiritually. Larry Byrne calls her a "black witch," and he hints that in voice and deed she is both evil and awesome (49). Ironically, because she is a non-mothering parent and her children refuse to meet her demands, they each manage to achieve a successful occupation and partner.

The term "grandeur" also applies to Jane's final residence. According to Nancy McCarthy, O'Connor's late good friend and the quintessential Bold Crone, the Cork "lunatic asylum" was designed by an Irish architect in a competition for a British royal palace. When authorities rejected his design, the irate Irishman gave his plans to county Cork for their asylum (Personal interview, 3 July 1988). The asylum stands even today, a magnificent Gothic structure and a chilling reminder of life's injustices inside and out. By moving Jane from the workhouse to the asylum, O'Connor bestows on her a parting gift of geographic grandeur. Despite her wicked intentions, O'Connor seems to admire Jane for her grandios manner.

The Bold Crone who follows Jane is from a story as well known and as frequently published as "Grandeur" is obscure. "The Long Road to Ummera" first appeared in The Bell in 1940 and was afterwards published in five collections, twice broadcast in Ireland, and

translated into German and Flemish. It is the story of Abby Bat Heige, an old woman who knows she is about to die and who wants to be taken for burial to the town from which she came forty years earlier--"and not by the short road either!" she demands (CS 51). Through a lot of scheming and the assistance of her lodger, a local jarvy, a policeman, and a priest, she gets half way home and then dies. In the end they summon her son, who completes the plans as she wished.

"The Long Road to Ummera" marks a turning point in O'Connor's narrative technique. He wrote the story originally as a story teller's tale, in the style of Timothy Buckley, and he read it on the radio in that version (A/39 a) in 1940, but by 1944, when he published it in Crab Apple Jelly, he had removed the story teller's frame and fashioned instead a more concentrated character study of what became one of his most memorable Bold Crones.

One early version is entitled "On the Long Road" (A/39-b), a somewhat vague name which implies a journey without specifying what kind or without designating that the journeyer reaches a destination. The early story covers a longer period of time than the later one: it begins with Abby's arrival in Cork in absolute poverty with her husband and son and continues with her son's rise to prosperity and the old woman's stubborn refusal either to share the "grandeur" of his fine house or to abandon her dream of burial in Ummera (CS 49). The portrait of Abby which emerges is filtered through the story teller's dialogue in much the same way that the glimpses of Julie Casey and Jane Dwyer are delivered. As a result, the personality of the narrator tends to prevent in-depth characterization.

The collected version shows just how far O'Connor had progressed in moving from the public craft of story telling to the private art of short story writing. The title no longer implies a mere journey but instead specifies a destination, and with the change in title, Abby joins the old women in An Only Child who know where they are going. O'Connor also eliminates the details of Abby's early life: her arrival and her son's rise from poverty. Instead he adds specificity as in the title and zeroes in on the old woman at the moment when she is about to make the trip. He opens with a poig-nant visual portrait of Abby and continues by developing her personality through her dialogue and dealings with the various men who come to her assistance. The readers are no longer witness to the wonder which the story teller is sharing with a friend; instead, the narrator speaks directly to the readers and allows them to sense Abby's ugliness and awkwardness, feel her pulse, and perceive her pace at close range:

> Always in the evenings you saw her shuffle up the road to Miss O.'s for her little jug of porter, a shapeless lump of an old woman in a plaid shawl, faded to the color of snuff, that dragged her head down on to her bosom where she clutched its folds in one hand; a canvas apron and a pair of men's boots without laces. Her eyes were puffy and screwed up in tight little buds of flesh and her rosy old face that might have been carved out of a turnip was all crumpled with blindness. The old heart was failing her . . . the rhythm of life had slowed down in her till you could scarcely detect its faint and sluggish beat. (CS 48)

Although she has a heart with a "sluggish beat," Abby has a "harsh croaking old voice" that can rise "to a shout" (CS 51), and in the end she is heard by her friends in both Cork and Ummera. Just as she requested, her son drives the hearse by the long road and stops when they arrive at "the roofless cabin" which she had always remembered. Turning to the waiting neighbors, her son gives voice to Abby's final wish in the very words she had chosen: "Neighbors, this is Abby, Batty Heige's daughter, that kept her promise to ye at the end of all" (55).

The character of Abby was inspired by O'Connor's "huge, shiftless, and dirty" paternal grandmother, whom he describes in his autobiographical volume in terms similar to Abby and who repeatedly promised to come back to haunt her son if he did not return her to her native village for burial (OC 19). Perhaps because his father failed to fulfill his grandmother's wishes, O'Connor created a new story for her. She was an old woman whom he disliked because she stood for everything opposite to his delicate and beautiful mother: "a stout, coarse peasant woman," whom O'Connor remembers flopping about "in bare feet" and having a "curious shrugging" which he traced down to a "common dislike for soap and water" (OC 12). At one point in her residence with her son's family, she taught her grandson the first words he knew in Irish, which was her natural tongue. When he later went on to read, write, and translate in Irish, he must have developed a respect for her which surmounted his original disgust. From her ugliness he created an admirable and loveable creature; in her literary burial O'Connor's grandmother O'Donovan lives on.

Fourteen years passed between "The Long Road to Ummera" in 1940 and the next Bold Crone story. During this time O'Connor endured a variety of domestic storms, moved to America and taught at Harvard and Northwestern, and wrote and published numerous stories about juveniles, the clergy, and romantic young people, but none about Bold Crones. From the mid-forties onward he was publishing in The New Yorker and other American magazines and began writing for a broader, more sophisticated audience. Although the ugly old ladies of the lanes disappear from his repertoire, in the five stories that follow, more

modern versions of the same character type arise in varying degrees of grandeur and grotesquerie.

The first of these stories is entitled "The Lonely Rock" and is based on a bizarre experience from O'Connor's own life. The "rock" is O'Connor's mother, who was residing with O'Connor and his first wife in England. The complication arises when a woman with whom O'Connor had been living and by whom he had had a son comes with the baby to live with O'Connor and his wife (Joan O'Donovan, see Chapter III, n. 1).

The story is told by a first-person participating narrator, Phil, a family friend who explains that Jack Courtenay had "a mania for a practical joke" (MS 370) and a weakness for pretty girls, while his wife Sylvia blandly appeared to tolerate it all. Because Phil has always been attuned to the peculiarities of Jack and Sylvia's lifestyle, he goes along with the tale they devise to tell Jack's mother: namely that the visitor is Sylvia's friend, Margaret, whose husband has been killed in the war and who will live with them until she can find a job.

Over the years Jack and Sylvia have attempted to conceal their non-conformist lifestyle from Mrs. Courtenay and in the process have tended to isolate her. Likewise Mrs. Courtenay in her naivete has attempted to protect her son and his wife from things she thinks they should not know. She prefers instead to confide in Phil such notions, for example, as her disapproval of English morals and the story of "the really nice sodality man . . . who got it from leaning up against the side of a ship" (MS 374).

Almost as soon as Margaret and the baby arrive, Mrs. Courtenay recognizes that the child is Jack's, but she does not tell anyone. Later, after the mother and child leave, Mrs. Courtenay tells Phil that she knew whose child it was from the beginning. Only then does Phil realize how lonely Mrs. Courtenay has been, first having lost the grandchild to whom she had become attached and later having had to protect Sylvia from what she thought Sylvia did not know.

As pointed out earlier, the story tellers in many of the early tales must convince the friends to whom they are talking that they their stories are worth hearing and that they understand the impact. To develop the sound of a man's voice speaking without the story teller's frame, in this as in many stories, O'Connor creates a participating narrator like Phil, who relates directly by confiding in the reader. Thus, despite the humorous details of the situation, Phil argues a strong case for the reader to sympathize with "The Lonely Rock." "I had seen it only as the tragedy of Jack and Sylvia and Margaret," he discloses, "but what

was their loneliness to that of the old woman to whom tragedy presented itself as in a foreign tongue?" (MS 384-385). The tragedy that Phil discovers is that Mrs. Courtney has been praying for Margaret's deceased husband, who in reality never existed:

> 'It might be God's will her poor husband was killed,' Mrs. Courtenay said. 'God help us, and I can never get the poor boy out of my head. I pray for him night and morning. 'Twould be such a shock to him if he ever found out. And the baby so lovely and all--oh, the dead image of Jack at his age.' (385)

This is the only Bold Crone who does not make her voice heard; like earlier Connorean women, she chooses silence. Nevertheless, she exits with grandeur. Phil at first considers telling Sylvia about Mrs. Courtenay's mistake, but he realizes he must honor her confidence. "Besides, it would have seemed like a betrayal. I had shifted my allegiance," he admits. Like the narrator in "A Bachelor's Story" who falls in love with Madge Hale, Phil recognizes the beauty of Mrs. Courtenay's belief, and asks us to honors her silence.

In "The Lonely Rock" O'Connor creates a kind of fanciful stoic who has a somewhat tragic aura in her brave misunderstanding, even with support of her friend Phil. In a story published three years later, another Bold Crone has a similarly wistful misunderstanding, but she refuses to remain silent and dominates the dialogue up to the last word, despite the fact that she does not get where she wants to go. "Requiem" is a story about a nameless old woman in her sixties who asks the parish priest to say Mass for her dead dog Timmy. The priest is appalled and tells her that because dogs cannot incur guilt, prayers for them will not make any difference, but the old woman remains unmoved and replies "comfortably": "They have souls, and people are only deluding themselves about it. Anything that can love has a soul" (CS 634).

Nancy McCarthy claimed that she actually did ask the priest to say Mass for her dog, and as in the short story, the priest turned her down (Personal interview, 3 July 1986). One can imagine that O'Connor enjoyed giving the old woman in "Requiem" the same strong voice that Nancy used whenever she went questing. In the opening lines the narrator presents a character who closely resembles Nancy in her old age: "a frail little woman" who has "a long face, with big eyes that looked as though they had wept a great deal" (CS 638). Later the narrator characterizes her as "a terrible little old woman" who "exercised a sort of fascination" over the priest when she challenges his theology (632). After she gets her stride in discussing her deceased husband and dog, however, she takes over the dialogue, and the

narrator almost disappears. When she is finally convinced that the priest is not able to say Mass for her dog, she asks him if she can get the Bishop to give him permission. Later, she says that she would write the Pope if she were better with the pen. She leaves promising to pray for the priest and certain she will see him along with her dog in heaven. In the end, the once "stern" and "glowering" (631) priest grows "gentle and timorous", and one may assume that he was close to being convinced by the beliefs of the Bold Crone (634).

In essence the story is not much more than a simple request and a strong refusal, but O'Connor enriches it with a long suspenseful introduction in which the priest believes that Timmy is first the woman's son, then her husband, and finally a step-son. The value of "Requiem" to the Bold Crone canon lies in the fact that, unlike earlier women, this old woman needs neither a friend nor a narrator to convey her message or explain her position. It is a woman's voice speaking when, at the end, she comforts the priest for what she is sure is his ignorance: "I know you're a good man, and I'll remember you with the others that were good to me, and one of these days, with God's help we'll all be together again" (CS 634).

Four years later O'Connor published a story in The New Yorker with an equally vocal but much more successful Bold Crone. Nellie Conneely, the Bishop's housekeeper in "Achilles Heel," is a schemer reminiscent of the Tomboys and an incomparable verbal manipulator. As the title suggests, she is the point of weakness in the life of a great man, and O'Connor builds a rich satire around the relationship. In addition to Nellie's vast powers, she has the undying admiration of the narrator who, like a Greek chorus, sings small songs of praise about her throughout the narrative.

The narrator begins by asserting that Nellie has subjected the Bishop "to a degree unparalleled in marriage" and then reveals her leverage: the Bishop's gargantuan appetite. As a result, Nellie buys tenure with chicken and chops. The relationship, however, suffers when the Bishop discovers that she is running a smuggling business, and both she and the Bishop must resort to subterfuge to avoid her arrest and his gastronomic privation.

A series of dishonest persuasions culminates in the Bishop's humble confession to the revenue officer that it will kill him if they put his housekeeper in jail, and the revenuer agrees to remove the contraband from Nellie's safe in the Bishop's house in hopes that censure and disclosure will curtail her activities. The story ends with the old cleric deep in gloom and Nellie suggesting that "a nice, little, juicy bit of Limerick ham" will make "a new man" out of him (CS 602).

Like other Connorean women, Nellie recognizes the power of words, spoken and written. She plants the idea in the Bishop's mind that the revenue officer must be "mad" because his uncle was in the "lunatic asylum," and then subtly suggests that a man like the Bishop should not speak to a "whippersnapper" like the officer when he has "the ear of government" (CS 595). At last the Bishop shouts, "Give me my pen!" and Nellie's heart begins to "flutter." "In spite of strenuous detective work" Nellie never sees the Bishop's letter to the Irish Minister of Revenue, but she intercepts the reply and with "a real thrill of pride and satisfaction" pens a response which so frustrates the Minister that he drops the case (597). When Nellie persists in the business, the local revenue officer finally brings proof of her smuggling to the Bishop. Quick to act in her own defense, from behind the kitchen door where she is listening, Nellie enlists her verbal weapon and bursts "into a howl of grief" about her fifteen years of life "wasted" on the Bishop and his lack of "gratitude" (600). In the end the officer removes all of Nellie's stash, and the Bishop admits defeat: "If I was to give you my oath to control her for the future, would you believe me? You would not. I couldn't control her. You might be able to" (601). As a woman who supports herself by her own work, Nellie has secured her position by making the Bishop dependent on her, and O'Connor pays high tribute to her when she uses both pen and tongue to hold her place.

Nellie's profession is the focal point of the narrator's introduction, and he takes such a satiric tone in his opening lines that, at first, his speech seems to resemble the wife-beater's denunciation in "Grandeur," and one suspects that the woman "who preys on celibates" (CS 592) may be another "black witch" like Jane Dwyer ("Grandeur" 49).

> In one thing only is the Catholic Church more vulnerable than any human institution, and that is in the type of woman who preys on celibates--particularly the priest's housekeeper. The priest's housekeeper is one of the supreme examples of natural selection, because it has been practically proved that when for any reason she is transferred to a male who is not celibate, she pines away and dies. (CS 592)

The narrator quickly shifts tone, however, by establishing a status of power for priests' housekeepers and suggesting that they, of all women, have the most control over men:

> To say that she is sexless is to say both too much and too little, for, like the Church itself, she accepts chastity for a higher end--in her case the subjugation of some unfortunate man to a degree unparalleled in marriage . . . But the most powerful among these are the housekeepers of bishops. (CS 593)

Once the plot is underway, the narrator makes it his task to record instances of the Bishop's inferiority to Nellie. Thus when the Bishop decides to write to the Minister, the narrator credits him with being almost as wise as his housekeeper: "Like Nellie, he knew the secrets of power" (CS 595). When she intercepts the Minister's letter and writes her response, the narrator also approves: "Like all women of her kind, she had always had the secret desire to speak out boldly with the whole authority of the Church behind her, and now she had done it" (597). At the close of the story, the narrator offers his final accolade to a woman who can make words work by whatever means:

> His mouth was already watering, but he knew that there was no ham in Limerick or out of it that could lift his sorrow; that whenever a woman says something will make a new man of you, all she means is that like the rest of her crooked devices, it will make an old man of you before your time. (602).

A woman's voice speaks throughout the story, and unlike some early narrators, a man's voice speaks not to rescue woman but to acknowledge her power.

With the next Bold Crone, O'Connor leaves the episcopal palace and returns to the lanes of Cork. "A Set of Variations on a Borrowed Theme," published in 1960 in The New Yorker, tells the story of Kate Mahoney, a widow faced with the loss of her home because she is too old and arthritic to work. Like the Crones before her, she must be creative to survive. Since "motherhood is the only trade she knows," she remakes her life as a variation on that theme and, in order to avoid living with her married daughters or going to the workhouse, takes in a pair of illegitimate foster children (CS 473). With the advice and assistance of her friend Miss Hegarty, the nurse, Kate acquires first one and then a second baby boy, the illegitimate children of girls from good families who will pay well. Her mode of survival, however, is tinged with scandal: neither the neighbors nor her daughters approve of what they call the "holy show" she is making of herself with her disgraceful trade, but like her grotesque predecessors, she regenerates herself through determination. Matthews calls it the "last great story" O'Connor wrote before his death (334).

Part of Kate's greatness lies in her complexity, for she herself is a variation on the theme of physical and verbal grotesquerie. "Her hands and legs were knotted with rheumatics; she had a battered, inexpressive country woman's face, like a butcher's block in which the only good feature was the eyes, which looked astonishingly girlish and merry" (CS 470). She "shouted enough for a regimental sergeant-major" and her girls learned early that the only way to be heard was to shout back. The neighbors complained about their decent

children growing up alongside her illegitimate sons, but not "too loud" because Kate was "an obstinate woman" and had a "dirty tongue when she was roused" (471). Despite her rough exterior, however, Kate is a dreamer at heart, for she is secretly attracted "by the romance and mystery" of the boys' background, "something she had missed in her own sober and industrious life" (474).

The O'Connor Papers contain at least five different versions of the story which together reveal O'Connor's stiching and restitching over the years. One early version is entitled "The Mercenary" (A/83-C), a word which implies that Kate only took the children for the money. Another is called "The Hireling" (A/83- A), a term which points to the fact that Kate is only a paid mother not a real one. Michael Steinman suggests that O'Connor decided both titles were too harsh and unflattering for this tough but brave old woman and points out that in version after version O'Connor made changes to soften and feminize her. One change concerns her house which is not mentioned in an early draft. It is later introduced as "a little cottage" and finally becomes the topic of a paragraph of over a hundred words, a place of womanly pride where she wants to mother her second family and then die. The house is also a place where she can live a life of her own, as O'Connor explored in the story of Jane Harty. Along the way O'Connor also gives Kate a pair of good friends and thus secures for her a place in a sisterhood of women who remain faithful to the end.

Among the many issues which arise in this story are the problems of the foster child's search for his parents. Like Terry Early in "The Outcasts" (see Chapter II) the older of Kate's two boys, Jimmy, is "pursued by the dream of a normal life that he might have lived and of the normal family in which he might have grown up" (CS 491). As a result he sets out for England and finds his father although he eventually comes home to Kate, the woman he knows as "Mammy."

Like Jimmy, O'Connor felt the importance of Kate, and he rewrote the ending with almost every version in an attempt to bestow on her the kind of significance he gives to Minnie Connolly. The story published as "Variations on a Theme" in Collection Three concludes with an honorable tribute pronounced by Kate's daughter although it has a somewhat jealous ring to it:

> How was it that a woman so old could take the things the world had thrown away and from them fashion a new family, dearer to her than the old and better than any

she had known? (C3-65)

To this question the narrator makes a nebulous reply: "But Kate had taken her secret with her." While the idea of Kate's secret lends a mythic greatness to her rugged life, readers familiar with O'Connor's work can recognize this unknown quality as Bold Crone survivorship or the result of the kind of "quirky doggedness" which Donoghue notes is used by people who live "on the margin" (233).

By the time O'Connor wrote the final version, he seems to have realized that Kate's greatness could be expressed as the open praise of a female friend and not as the confidential expression of an admiring narrrator. Thus he allows her old crony Hanna to respond to the daughter's query with a final tribute:

> Wisha wasn't she a great little woman. She had them all against her and she bested them. They had everything, and she had nothing and she bested them all in the end. (CS 469)

Kate makes a brave statement by her life and gets where she wants to go; after her death, another Bold Crone takes over to eulogize. What matters is not how Kate gets there, but that she is superlative in the getting.

The last image of a Bold Crone appears in "The Corkerys," published in The New Yorker a month after O'Connor's death. I include the story earlier among the unmarried women in this study because the principal female character is May MacMahon, a young woman who enters a convent, leaves, and ultimately marries the youngest son of a large Catholic family (see Chapter III). The Bold Crone in the story plays a lesser role; nevertheless, she is a strong woman in her own right, and her story adds a final touch to the chapter.

Jospehine Corkery is a widow who managed to raise six children on limited means primarily with the help of the church. The great religious spirit of the family attracts the admiration of the young unmarried May MacMahon: Mrs. Corkery's brother is a Dean, her sister a Mother Superior, her oldest son a Dominican, and before the story is over her second son is a priest and her three daughters enter convents. Although the children and their friends grow up calling Mrs. Corkery "Reverend Mother," everyone is greatly surprised when she announces that she plans to enter the convent, and her brother "practically excommunicates her on the spot" (CS 557). It is the narrator who explains that "she had done her duty by her family, who were now all comfortably settled, and that she felt free to do what she

had always wanted to do." Later May, who had herself once had aspirations for a convent life, voices her own opinion of what motivated Mrs. Corkery:

> As a girl she had wanted to be a nun, but for family reasons it was impossible, so she had become a good wife and mother, instead. Now, after thirty years of pinching and scraping, her family had grown away from her and she could return to her early dream. (CS 557-558)

In the end May's mother tries to explain Josephine Corkery's gesture as a magnanimous motherly act: "Don't you see now that the boy's mother only entered the convent because she knew he'd never feel free while she was in the world" (560). Magnanimity, however, never seems to be an approved route in O'Connor's work, as this study has shown repeatedly. Nor do Bold Crones work out their last days in self-sacrificing deeds. Josephine knew that her last son would never marry as long as he had the responsibility of his mother, and rather than hold on to the security engendered by his sense of duty and become dependent on him in her old age like the mothers in "The Impossible Marriage," she found the church, which she had once wanted as a girl, had become her private source of security. Not unlike Kate, she had a trade which she knew better than any other, and she knew it would provide her with a passage to freedom. Silenced as a girl by her family's inability to finance her entrance into a convent, she is at last able to voice her wish.

Frank O'Connor grew up listening to an older woman's voice, and loving it: first the voice of his mother, later the voices of her cronies, and afterwards the voices of Bold Crones from all Ireland. He admired them for their sense of direction and their pursuit of goals.

Their stories reflect his varied efforts to give fiction the sound of a woman's voice speaking. Four of the early Bold Crone stories are narrated by a story teller who tries to convince the listener of a dynamic example of womanhood. In "The Sisters," one Bold Crone speaks for the others. In most cases, however, the story teller speaks for the character, and a woman's voice sounds only in bits of dialogue. Later O'Connor abandons the story teller and concentrates on a closer look at the character with a narrator who lets the reader hear through actual dialogue. In "The Lonely Rock" O'Connor devises a participating narrator who makes the reader his confidant. In "Achilles Heel" he uses a narrator who enhances a woman's status by his overt admiration for her. By the last stories, O'Connor had polished the technique so that the narrator could exit at the end and allow a woman to speak. Like the Bold Crones, O'Connor knew where he was going, and with them he arrived.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The sound of a woman's voice speaking links the writings of Frank O'Connor in mid-twentieth-century Ireland to the new image of Irish womanhood emerging at the end of the century. There are "territories of the voice," writes Irish poet Moya Cannon, that "intimate across death and generation/ how a secret was imparted" and how it "lived until now" (DeSalvo et al v). The "small unassailable words" of women have gradually made their way through the bedrock of patriarchal Ireland to "diminish caesars" and make themselves heard in an outpouring of writing by and about Irish women.

When the Act of Union in 1800 abolished the Irish Parliament, Ireland was left with no voice to raise against the inhumanities which the British allowed during the Great Famine of the mid-nineteenth century. The death of millions of people, which included most of the cotter class, and the subsequent waves of emigration produced a new socio-economic situation in which male supremacy flourished on the farms, in the towns, in the churches, and in the schools. Gaelic-Irish women who once could once claim near equality in their marital partnerships found themselves in a state of inferiority which offered little chance for marriage and, otherwise, the grim options to emigrate, migrate, or vegetate.

After the establishment of the Republic of Ireland in 1924, women in the new Irish state could exercise certain political rights, but they were professionally and socially bound by a constitution which limited their chances for growth outside the home and sexually governed by a state and church which prohibited abortion, contraception, and divorce. When Frank O'Connor returned to Cork in 1924 after his participation in the civil war, he found the conditions for women deplorable, and throughout his life he wrote and spoke out against the excesses of legislation and the lack of sexual education which hobbled Irish women.

His writing, however, would not all be political, for he found himself at the same time fascinated with the experience of Irish womanhood. That fascination led O'Connor to explore and sympathize with the lives of women as he heard their stories and recreated them in his fiction. As a story teller, O'Connor was equally intrigued with the narrative impulse,

and over the years he wrote and rewrote to construct the sound of both a man's voice speaking and a woman's in his work. In giving voice to the politics and experience of mid-century womanhood, O'Connor anticipates the "unexpected tide,/ the great wave" of women's writing which Moya Cannon celebrates in her poem, "Taom."

At the beginning of this study I explore the voice which O'Connor gives his Irish Tomboys and trace the adventures of his little girls as he allows them to enjoy the freedom of girlhood and to claim their territory. Before the end of each story, however, the Tomboys encounter some barrier--whether emotional, physical, or social--and they often relinquish their gains. Throughout adolescence, O'Connor's Quicksilver Girls explore dangerous new territories as they stand on the brink of the decisions that will determine their futures. The girls in the early stories are often voiceless or speak the wrong parts, but gradually O'Connor equips them with enough voice to communicate and ultimately to stake out a satisfactory claim. In the relationships which they later form, O'Connor's married women must reckon with the "hard cases" which they find in married life, and not infrequently they suffer deeply as silenced, ignorant women. As he does with the Quicksilver Girls, O'Connor slowly empowers his married women with voice and independence although some of them discover that liberation can yield "gain without gladness." Finally with the Bold Crones, O'Connor returns to his women the brave voices they had as girls, and each reclaims, at least in spirit, the territory known once to the "girl within."

There is an old Cornish proverb which goes: "Those without voices gets their lands took" (Welch in Sekine 233). Throughout his life O'Connor wanted to return those taken lands to the voiceless women of Ireland. He succeeded by returning to their stories the sound of a woman's voice speaking.

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Owene Hall Weber was born at Lookout Mountain, Tennessee, and educated at Girls' Preparatory School, Chattanooga, Tennessee, and Newcomb College, New Orleans, Louisiana. In 1971 she earned a B. A. in French and in 1976, an M. A. T. in English, both from Jacksonville University, Jacksonville, Florida. She receives the Ph. D. in English from the University of Florida in 1993.

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I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

R.B. Kershner, Chairman
Professor of English

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Alistair Duckworth
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